

Parish of Greencastle, Co. Tyrone, Diocese of Derry
St. Patrick's Church, Greencastle **Our Lady of the Wayside Church, Broughderg**
The Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday) (14th March, 2010)
The Parochial House, 164, Greencastle Road, Sheskinshule, Omagh, BT79 7RU
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Today is known as **Laetare Sunday**, a day that marks the halfway point of Lent and that celebrates our joy in being that much closer to the Resurrection of Christ, the day of our salvation. The name of the day comes from the first word of today's entrance antiphon, *Rejoice Jerusalem* it reminds us of Gaudete Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent and, as on that day, rose vestments may be worn. The secular world celebrates *Mothering Sunday* today.

Liturgy Schedule for the Fourth Week of Lent (15 th March, 2010 – 21 st March, 2010)			
Saturday Evening	St. Patrick's	5.30pm Confessions 6.00pm Vigil Mass for Sunday: Brian McDermott – 5 th Anniversary	
Sunday 14th March Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday)	St. Patrick's Our Lady of the Wayside	9:00am Requiem Mass for Mary McCaffrey 10.30am Confessions 11:00am Mass: 'Misso Pro Populo'	
Monday 15th March Fourth Week of Lent	St. Patrick's	10.00am Mass	
Tuesday 16th March Fourth Week of Lent	St. Patrick's	10.00am Mass	
Tuesday Evening Feast of St. Patrick	Our Lady of the Wayside	7.30pm Confessions 8.00pm Vigil Mass for Feast Day	
Wednesday 17th March	St. Patrick's	11.00am Mass	
Thursday 18th March Fourth Week of Lent	St. Patrick's	10.00am Mass	
Friday 19th March Fourth Week of Lent	St. Patrick's	8.00pm Mass	
Saturday 20th March Fourth Week of Lent	St. Patrick's	10.00am Mass	
Saturday Evening	St. Patrick's	5.30pm Confessions 6.00pm Vigil Mass for Sunday: John Tuohey – 2 nd Anniversary	
Sunday 21st March Fifth Sunday of Lent	St. Patrick's Our Lady of the Wayside	9:00am Mass: 'Misso Pro Populo'* 11:00am Mass	

*Solemn Annual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in St. Patrick's after **9.00am** Mass until concluding prayers at **4.00pm**

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread – Trócaire's Lenten theme for 2010: Please give the Trócaire box a prominent place in your home. Make this Lent another record breaker for your generosity. Thank you for everything you have given to previous Lenten campaigns, first established in 1973. Please Check out trocaire.org

Weekly Offerings: Thank you for your generosity to last week's collection which amounted to **£1,320**.
Please support your parish by using your envelope even if you must attend Mass outside your parish, thank you. Envelopes received from visitors coming to Mass in Greencastle are returned to those parishes. **The annual collection for Clerical Education and Formation will be taken up on St. Patrick's Day (Wednesday 17th March).**

Remembering Our Dead: We pray for **Mary McCaffrey** who died on Thursday, we offer prayerful support to Dan and their sons and all who mourn her. We also pray for **Brian McDermott** and **Paddy O'Hagan** whose anniversaries occur at this time.

Parish Census Forms: Thank you for your cooperation. If you have a form please return it as soon as possible.

Episcopal Ordination: Saturday 20th March is the anniversary of the Episcopal Ordination of our auxiliary bishop, Most Rev. Bishop Francis Lagan (1988). Please pray for him, especially on Saturday.

Our Lady of Lourdes PS – Cookery Lessons: In the school on Thursday 18th March from 7.00pm until 9.00pm.

Prayer Friends for the Confirmation Class of 2010: Thank you for your daily support.

Parish Finance Committee Meeting: Monday 15th March at 8.30pm.

Northern Ireland Hospice – Big Walk Week: Saturday 17th April to Saturday 24th April. Check out nihospice.org for details.

Next Sunday's Readings: Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 125; Philippians 3:8-14; John 8:1-11 Lectionary I, page 313
(Sunday: Year C) (Weekday: Year 2)

Lotto Numbers: 3, 5, 13, 18 (6 winners with 3 numbers – £10 each) **Next Jackpot:** £1,900

Parish Liturgy for 20 th / 21 st March, 2010	St. Patrick's (6.00pm Vigil Mass)	St. Patrick's (9.00am Mass)	Our Lady of the Wayside (11.00am Mass)
Prayers of Intercession	Volunteer needed	Kevin Clarke	Volunteer needed
Eucharistic Ministry	The family of Luke Breslin	The family of Tara and Sean Conneely	

Solemn Annual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: This will take place in St. Patrick's Church, Greencastle next weekend. Please feel welcome to attend at any time throughout the day to pray for your personal needs or blessings as well as those of our wider parish community and world. However, to ensure a continuity of worshippers I invite people from the named areas to take responsibility to ensure a presence at specific times.

"Teach us the lesson of silence, of prayer, of quiet – Lord hear us"

Time	Townland	Time	Townland
10.00am	Genhull / Aughminacroy	1.30pm	Benefreaghan
10.30am	Muniamale / Alworries	2.00pm	Cashel / Brackagh / Leaghan
11.00am	Crock / Coneyglen	2.30pm	Teebane / Carnarancy
11.30am	Aughscribba	3.00pm	Crockanboy
12.00noon	Broughderg / Evisheession	3.30pm	Maryville / Sheskinsule View
12.30pm	Formil East	4.00pm	Sheskinshule
1.00pm	Formil West	4.30pm	Concluding prayers and Benediction

Our Lady of the Wayside Church, Broughderg 25th Anniversary (1st September, 2010): To mark the Jubilee Celebrations plans are in place to produce a *Sanctuary Tapestry*. The proposed image requires a wide variety of colours of small pieces (approximately 1/2 yard size) of cotton material. If you think that you have anything suitable to donate you can contact any of the following committee members - Anne Mc Dermott, Teresa McCrory, Sarah Coyle, Mary McKenna, Josephine Clarke or Fr. Hasson. If you received any of the sacraments on your spiritual journey there (Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Marriage) and have a photograph or a story you would like to share with our community contact the above.

The Footprints of God – A Retreat for Lent: Church of Christ the King, Strathroy, Omagh. Monday Evenings 8 – 9 pm
Each Monday evening of Lent we will journey with Jesus as he makes his way to Jerusalem. Reflecting on his journey, where he suffered and died for us, we grow in understanding the journey of our own lives finding nourishment and guidance for our pilgrimage through life. *Refreshments will be served each evening* **... Join us as we walk in the Footprints of God ...**

15 th Mar.	Jesus Stills a Storm - <i>A Quiet Mind</i>	29 th Mar.	Crucifixion - <i>Living with Loss</i>
22 nd Mar.	Gethsemane - <i>Living through Crises</i>	Easter Week	Resurrection - <i>Reflections on Eternity</i>

On St. Patrick's Day we are asked to remember in our prayers those who have emigrated. Many of you reading this will no doubt have been touched by the sense of loss that comes with a loved one emigrating. St. Patrick first encountered Ireland as a migrant. Thus, it is fitting that on the Feast of the National Patron, we again seek to highlight the needs of the many Irish emigrants spread throughout the world. Today we too remember in a special way those emigrants whose journey has been a hard one, particularly the elderly Irish in Britain, our undocumented in the United States and Irish prisoners overseas.

Engaged Encounter is designed for couples preparing for marriage and seeking to enrich communication in all aspects of their relationship. It fulfils diocesan requirements for marriage preparation. The next weekend will take place on 20th and 21st March in Dromantine Conference Centre, Newry. Booking essential before 8th March. Call (048) 7930 0340 or visit marriageencounter.ie.

Loreto House (Linsfort, Buncrana, Co Donegal) – Holy Week Retreat: 28th March until 3rd April. With Fr. Colm Lavelle S.J. To book a place call 00353 74 / 9362204 or email info@loretolinsfort.com Cost: €380 residential and €200 non-residential. **Prayer Meetings every Monday in Lent:** Beginning 22nd February from 8.00pm to 9.00pm.

Foyle Hospice – Borderland Reunion Night: Saturday 27th March at the City Hotel, Derry. Tickets (€8.00) available from Foyle Hospice Fundraising Centre on (028) 7135 9888 or the City Hotel on (028) 7136 5800. Music by *Midnight Showband!*

Haiti Peruvian Annual Clothing Appeal: The organisers intend to continue the clothing collection at St. Columille's GAC in Carrickmore for another few weeks. *Your support for this worthy cause would be much appreciated*

Carmelite Retreat Centre (Termonbacca, Derry). Mass for the Sick on Tuesday 16th March at 8.00pm. We are also offering you an **Easter Weekend Retreat** from 8.00pm on Friday 26th to Sunday 28th March – an excellent preparation for the feast of Easter. Telephone (028) 7126 2512 during office hours only.

The IOSAS Centre and Celtic Prayer Garden, Muff, Co. Donegal is open on St Patrick's Day from 2.00pm to 5.00pm with music, dancing, hot food, children's crafts, prayer garden. You are welcome!

BADA An Bruach Dearg Community Centre – Upcoming Events:

Sunday 14th March	Usual fortnightly dance. Music by Dallas.
Thursday 25th March	Age Concern's <i>Check it Out</i> roadshow will visit from 10.00am to 2.00pm. Adverts in Post Offices
Every Friday Night	Card game from 8.30pm

Items for inclusion should be forwarded to the Parochial House by the Wednesday evening prior to publication

Medjugorje Irish Centre: Every week for a year we are giving away one weeks free apartment accommodation for up to 4 people. Text the word PILGRIM followed by your name and county to 60777 or phone us and we can enter you into the draw for free. Special introductory offer E260 package. Website www.med-irishcentre.com Tel: (028) 82241888.

Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes (16th – 21st July, 2010): Cost £629 – payable in instalments. Application forms are now available in the sacristy (Greencastle).or from from the Pilgrimage Office, Derry. Telephone: (028) 7126 0293. Special arrangements are made for the youth who will be lead by the Pilgrimage Youth Team.

The Catholic Chaplaincy QUB Centenary Dinner Dance: Tickets are now available for the Centenary Dinner Dance, which is taking place on 22nd April in the Whitla Hall at Queen's. If you remember the Chaplaincy Discos, Céilidh or Mrs. Mac famous sandwiches, Liam , Noel, Mary or Anne, Lough Derg pilgrimages, packed Ash Wednesday Masses or a wealth of other Chaplaincy memories then come along and celebrate with us. The Dinner is open to past and present students and staff of the University , their families and friends and all who consider themselves friends of the Chaplaincy. Take the opportunity to arrange to meet with classmates and friends. The tickets cost £40 each and can be purchased from the Chaplaincy at 28 Elmwood Ave or from the Welcome Centre at QUB (or if your send a stamped addressed envelope and a chq made payable to "The Catholic Chaplaincy" we'll post your tickets to you.) [Open seating will be norm but tables of 8 can be arranged]. For any further info please contact the Chaplaincy on (028) 9066 9737 or email cc@qubcc.org. Check out qubcc.org. If you have any Chaplaincy related photos we would love copies of them for the Centenary Display!

Broughderg First Responders Scheme: The role of a First Responder is to attend, when possible a patient who has collapsed and administer CPR and / or defibrillation whilst awaiting for an ambulance crew to attend. The Broughderg First Responders are volunteers who live and work in the local area they are fully trained and are fully insured. When an appropriate 999 call is received from the area covered by the First Responder Scheme; the volunteers are notified and try to attend to provide whatever care is reasonable. First Responders will only attend when dispatched by Ambulance Control. They have no role in the diagnosis or management of illness apart from the collapsed patient. There will always be a 999 ambulance in attendance. Volunteers are clearly identifiable as they will have ID with them. They will provide whatever care is reasonable and will endeavour to assist either doctors or members of the Ambulance Service as appropriate. If you require any further information about the scheme please do not hesitate to get in touch.
Janet Shields (Dalriada Urgent Care) (028) 2566 3502

Knock Marriage Introduction Bureau: The aim of the Bureau is to introduce people considering marriage to a suitable marriage partner. Over 800 marriages have taken place as a result of these introductions. If you are searching for a suitable partner, why not consider applying? For further information contact the Bureau at Knock, Co. Mayo. Phone 00353 94937 5960 or visit our website at www.knockmarriagebureau.com and read about the workings of the Bureau.

Study Theology From Home: The Dominicans are offering a theology programme specifically for lay people, offered by distance learning. This means that one can study for a certificate, diploma or degree in theology, and even more importantly, become more educated in the Faith, all from the comfort of home. For more information contact The Priory Institute, Tallaght Village, Dublin 24, Tel: 00353 1404 8124/7 or email enquiries@prioryinstitute.com Visit our website www.prioryinstitute.com

Lenten Messages

Some practical suggestions for Lent: There are many ways to keep a good Lent, here are a few: Try to abstain from a particular food or pleasure II Do something extra, like attending the Monday evening Retreat in Strathroy or visiting the sick II Spend some time reflecting on your own baptism...asking God to renew the gifts you have already received II Take part in penitential services and the Stations of the Cross II Whatever you do or give up, do it with joy and moderation.

Lenten sacrifice: Fridays in Lent are days of abstinence from meat for those of 14 years of age or older. Good Friday (2nd April) this year is also a day of fasting for those aged between 18 and 59, who are limited to one full meatless meal that day. Lent is also a time for voluntary acts of self-denial and acts of prayer and charity, which can include attending daily Mass, Scripture study, Stations of the Cross, almsgiving and showing mercy and kindness to others.

Lenten Guidelines: Fasting is to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday by everyone aged 18 years of age and older, who has not yet celebrated their 59th birthday. On a fast day, one full meal is allowed. Two other meals, enough to maintain strength, may be taken, according to each one's needs, but together they should not equal another full meal. Eating between meals is not permitted, but consuming liquids, including milk and juices is allowed. **Abstinence** is observed by everyone 14 years of age and older. On days of abstinence no meat is allowed. Note that when health or the ability to work would be seriously affected, the law does not oblige. Ash Wednesday, all the Fridays of Lent, and Good Friday are days of abstinence. If a person is unable to observe the above regulations due to ill health or other serious reasons, other suitable forms of self-denial are encouraged.

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread – Trócaire's Lenten theme for 2010: Please give the Trócaire box a prominent place in your home. Make this Lent another record breaker for your generosity. Thank you for everything you have given to previous Lenten campaigns, first established in 1973. Please check out trocaire.org

The fourteen Stations of the Cross are as follows:

- I. Jesus is condemned to death: Leaving the house of Caiphas, where he had been blasphemed, and the house of Herod, where he had been mocked, Jesus is dragged before Pilate, his back torn with scourges, his head crowned with thorns; and he is condemned to a disgraceful death.
- II. Jesus is made to carry his cross: A heavy cross is laid on the bruised shoulders of Jesus. He receives it with meekness: it is the instrument with which he is to redeem the world.
- III. Jesus falls the first time: Bowed down under the weight of the cross, Jesus slowly sets forth on the way to Calvary amidst the mockeries and insults of the crowd. His agony in the garden has exhausted his body and he is sore from blows and wounds; his strength fails him and he falls to the ground under the weight of the cross.
- IV. Jesus meets his Blessed Mother: Still burdened by his cross and wounded by his fall, Jesus proceeds on his way. He is met by his Mother. What a meeting that must have been! What a sword of anguish must have pierced her heart!
- V. Simon of Cyrene is made to help Jesus carry his cross: As the strength of Jesus fails and he is unable to proceed, the soldiers seize Simon of Cyrene from the crowd and make him help Jesus. The virtue of that cross changed his cross and the compulsory task became a privilege and a joy.
- VI. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus: As Jesus continues on the way and covered with the sweat of death, a woman moved by compassion, makes her way through the crowd and wipes his face with a towel. As a reward of her piety, the impression of his sacred countenance is miraculously imprinted upon the towel.
- VII. Jesus falls the second time: The pain of the wounds and the loss of blood increasing with every step, again his strength fails him and Jesus falls to the ground a second time.
- VIII. The women of Jerusalem weep for Jesus: At the sight of the sufferings of Jesus, some holy women in the crowd were so touched with sympathy that they openly bewailed and lamented him. Jesus, knowing the things that were to happen to Jerusalem because of its rejection of him, turned to them and said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."
- IX. Jesus falls the third time: Jesus had now almost arrived at the summit of Calvary, but before he reached the spot where he was to be crucified, his strength again fails him and falls the third time.
- X. Jesus is stripped of his garments: Having finally arrived at the place of crucifixion they prepared to crucify him. His garments are removed from his bleeding body and he stands naked before the people, while the soldiers cast lots to see who shall keep his garment.
- XI. Jesus is nailed to the cross: The cross is laid upon the ground and Jesus is stretched upon his bed of death. At one and the same time he offers his bruised body to his heavenly Father of behalf of all peoples, and to his executioners to be nailed by them to the wood.

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- XII.** Jesus dies on the cross: For three hours Jesus hung upon the cross, and in the midst of his sufferings he has forgiven those who condemned him, pardoned the good thief, and committed his Mother and the beloved disciple to each other's care. All is now consummated, and, bowing his head, he breathes his last.
- XIII.** Jesus is taken down from the cross: The crowds have left Calvary and none remain except the beloved disciple and some holy women who support Jesus' blessed Mother. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus take down the lifeless body of Jesus and place it in his Mother's arms.
- XIV.** Jesus is laid in the Sepulchre: The body of her Son is taken from his Mother and laid in the tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. The tomb is closed and there the corpse remains until its glorious resurrection.

The traditional way of praying the Stations of the Cross in the church is to walk from station to station.

At each station one genuflects or bows and recites certain prayers which include an 'Our Father,' 'Hail Mary' and 'Glory Be to the Father.' People also pray the Stations at home using the same prayers and meditating for a moment on each station.

How to return to the church

- Q.** I have two friends who left the Catholic Church years ago, one because he became disillusioned with a priest, and the other just stopped attending Mass. Now they both want to return but don't know how. Someone said they must go through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults process, which doesn't make sense to me. Another said they must talk with a priest, make a good confession and that is all. I'm sure other former Catholics would also like to know how to come back. **(Maryland)**
- A.** You are right. Many Catholics have departed from the practice of their faith and sometime later wish to return, but are discouraged because they envision some complicated process to do so. Most of us don't realise how hesitant and afraid Catholics can be who have been away, perhaps feel some guilt and frequently see themselves as somehow unworthy to be active in the church again. Encouragement and support from people such as you is invaluable. I thank you for being interested in their struggle, and I hope other Catholics who have friends like this will follow your example. The second person you refer to is basically correct. Theoretically, all one needs to do is return to the sacraments — penance and the Eucharist — and resume a prayer life and regular participation in the Mass. In practice, however, most of the time something more is at least helpful, if not practically necessary. If one has been away for a number of years, for example, much may have happened in the intervening time that could be unfamiliar; they need to catch up. Particularly, anyone who has not been to Mass for the past 30 years or so will have missed many changes in the liturgies of the Mass and sacraments that will confuse them if they're not prepared. Perhaps most obviously, experiencing and trying to participate in the Mass in English will be puzzling unless someone helps them understand reasons for those changes and how they enhance and enrich our Catholic worship. Another factor in helping them return could be the reason they stopped living a Catholic life in the first place. A real or perceived injury suffered from a priest or other representative of the church, or just a serious misunderstanding, is the reason a huge number of Catholic people stay away, often for years. They need help in healing. Whatever the reason, I believe it is well worthwhile for "former" Catholics to meet with a parish priest or other parish minister to find out what is necessary and ease their return. Of course, a priest will also be able to help such individuals deal appropriately with other possible factors, previous marriages for example, that will necessarily be involved in renewing their practice of the Catholic faith.

Questions for this column may be sent to Father Dietzen at Box 3315, Peoria, IL 61651
or e-mail jjdietzen@aol.com

Catholic News Service

PAPAL MESSAGE FOR LENT 2010 VATICAN CITY, 4 FEB 2010 (VIS)

Made public today was the 2010 Lenten Message of the Holy Father Benedict XVI. The text, dated 30th October, 2009, has as its title a passage from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans: "The justice of God has been manifested through faith in Jesus Christ". The full English-language translation of the document is given below:

"Each year, on the occasion of Lent, the Church invites us to a sincere review of our life in light of the teachings of the Gospel. This year, I would like to offer you some reflections on the great theme of justice, beginning from the Pauline affirmation: 'The justice of God has been manifested through faith in Jesus Christ'.

"First of all, I want to consider the meaning of the term 'justice', which in common usage implies 'to render to every man his due', according to the famous expression of Ulpian, a Roman jurist of the third century. In reality, however, this classical definition does not specify what 'due' is to be rendered to each person. What man needs most cannot be guaranteed to him by law. In order to live life to the full, something more intimate is necessary that can be granted only as a gift: we could say that man lives by that love which only God can communicate since He created the human person in His image and likeness. Material goods are certainly useful and required - indeed Jesus Himself was concerned to heal the sick, feed the crowds that followed Him and surely condemns the indifference that even today forces hundreds of millions into death through lack of food, water and medicine - yet 'distributive' justice does not render to the human being the totality of his 'due'. Just as man needs bread, so does man have even more need of God. St. Augustine notes: if 'justice is that virtue which gives everyone his due ... where, then, is the justice of man, when he deserts the true God?'

"The Evangelist Mark reports the following words of Jesus, which are inserted within the debate at that time regarding what is pure and impure: 'There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him. ... What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts'. Beyond the immediate question concerning food, we can detect in the reaction of the Pharisees a permanent temptation within man: to situate the origin of evil in an exterior cause. Many modern ideologies deep down have this presupposition: since injustice comes 'from outside', in order for justice to reign, it is sufficient to remove the exterior causes that prevent it being achieved. This way of thinking - Jesus warns - is ingenuous and short-sighted. Injustice, the fruit of evil, does not have exclusively external roots; its origin lies in the human heart, where the seeds are found of a mysterious co-operation with evil. With bitterness the Psalmist recognises this: 'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me'. Indeed, man is weakened by an intense influence, which wounds his capacity to enter into communion with the other. By nature, he is open to sharing freely, but he finds in his being a strange force of gravity that makes him turn in and affirm himself above and against others: this is egoism, the result of original sin. Adam and Eve, seduced by Satan's lie, snatching the mysterious fruit against the divine command, replaced the logic of trusting in Love with that of suspicion and competition; the logic of receiving and trustfully expecting from the Other with anxiously seizing and doing on one's own, experiencing, as a consequence, a sense of disquiet and uncertainty. How can man free himself from this selfish influence and open himself to love?

"At the heart of the wisdom of Israel, we find a profound link between faith in God who 'lifts the needy from the ash heap' and justice towards one's neighbour. The Hebrew word itself that indicates the virtue of justice, 'sedaqah', expresses this well. 'Sedaqah', in fact, signifies on the one hand full acceptance of the will of the God of Israel; on the other hand, equity in relation to one's neighbour, especially the poor, the stranger, the orphan and the widow. But the two meanings are linked because giving to the poor for the Israelite is none other than restoring what is owed to God, who had pity on the misery of His people. It was not by chance that the gift to Moses of the tablets of the Law on Mount Sinai took place after the crossing of the Red Sea. Listening to the Law presupposes faith in God who first 'heard the cry' of His people and 'came down to deliver them out of hand of the Egyptians'. God is attentive to the cry of the poor and in return asks to be listened to: He asks for justice towards the poor, the stranger, the slave. In order to enter into justice, it is thus necessary to leave that illusion of self-sufficiency, the profound state of closure, which is the very origin of injustice. In other words, what is needed is an even deeper 'exodus' than that accomplished by God with Moses, a liberation of the heart, which the Law on its own is powerless to realise. Does man have any hope of justice then?

"The Christian Good News responds positively to man's thirst for justice, as St. Paul affirms in the Letter to the Romans: 'But now the justice of God has been manifested apart from law ... the justice of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by His blood, to be received by faith'.

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"What then is the justice of Christ? Above all, it is the justice that comes from grace, where it is not man who makes amends, heals himself and others. The fact that 'expiation' flows from the 'blood' of Christ signifies that it is not man's sacrifices that free him from the weight of his faults, but the loving act of God Who opens Himself in the extreme, even to the point of bearing in Himself the 'curse' due to man so as to give in return the 'blessing' due to God. But this raises an immediate objection: what kind of justice is this where the just man dies for the guilty and the guilty receives in return the blessing due to the just one? Would this not mean that each one receives the contrary of his 'due'? In reality, here we discover divine justice, which is so profoundly different from its human counterpart. God has paid for us the price of the exchange in His Son, a price that is truly exorbitant. Before the justice of the Cross, man may rebel for this reveals how man is not a self-sufficient being, but in need of Another in order to realize himself fully. Conversion to Christ, believing in the Gospel, ultimately means this: to exit the illusion of self-sufficiency in order to discover and accept one's own need - the need of others and God, the need of His forgiveness and His friendship.

"So we understand how faith is altogether different from a natural, good-feeling, obvious fact: humility is required to accept that I need Another to free me from 'what is mine', to give me gratuitously 'what is His'. This happens especially in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Thanks to Christ's action, we may enter into the 'greatest' justice, which is that of love, the justice that recognises itself in every case more a debtor than a creditor, because it has received more than could ever have been expected. Strengthened by this very experience, the Christian is moved to contribute to creating just societies, where all receive what is necessary to live according to the dignity proper to the human person and where justice is enlivened by love.

"Dear brothers and sisters, Lent culminates in the Paschal Triduum, in which this year, too, we shall celebrate divine justice - the fullness of charity, gift, salvation. May this penitential season be for every Christian a time of authentic conversion and intense knowledge of the mystery of Christ, who came to fulfil every justice. With these sentiments, I cordially impart to all of you my apostolic blessing".

MESS/LENT 2010/... VIS 100204 (1480)

"We need a little bit of silence. We need a space without the constant bombardment of images."
Pope Benedict XVI encouraging the priests of the Rome diocese in fasting from words and images this Lent

Workout for the Soul in Search of God

Interview with Official from Ignatian Exercises Federation

By Antonio Gaspari

ROME, FEB. 5, 2010 (Zenit.org) Every year, a countless number of Catholics escape from their typical activities and take days to retreat into prayer following the system of the Ignatian spiritual exercises.

The Pope himself is one of these Catholics; Benedict XVI's annual spiritual exercises with the Roman Curia begin Feb. 21.

Just prior to the Holy Father's retreat, the Italian Federation of Spiritual Exercises will hold their annual assembly. The president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, will be one of the participants in the three-day meeting to discuss the relationship between spiritual exercises and the people of the Church.

In order to understand better the history, timeliness and modern practice of spiritual exercises, ZENIT spoke with Passionist Father Stanislao Renzi, national secretary of the federation.

ZENIT: Many young people don't even know what the spiritual exercises are or why they are done. Can you explain them briefly?

Father Renzi: It's true that many young people no longer even know what the spiritual exercises are or why they are practiced: Today youth live in a world that loves noise, not silence and recollection, and many want to be free of laws and discipline. It is difficult to speak to them of the "search for the will of God in deciding their own life."

However, there are many [young adults] -- between 20 and 30 years old -- who do the spiritual exercises by assiduously attending courses in retreat houses, at times on weekends. The representatives [of these retreats] offer the young people the possibility to pray and to reflect individually or in community, so that they discern their choices in life and make their own spiritual journey in the Church. The courses are open to all young people who wish to make their own lives mature according to God's plan.

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It should also be remembered that, according to St. Ignatius, the spiritual exercises are not a time of study or of simple recollection and prayer. They are a search: "As walking and running are physical exercises, so any form of preparing and disposing the soul to get rid of all disordered affections and, after being rid of them, to seek the will of God in deciding on one's own life, for the salvation of one's soul, is called spiritual exercises." (Es. Sp. Ann.1). ZENIT: Can you tell us the history of the spiritual exercises? When did they begin? What does the Bible say in this respect? Who are the saints who practiced the spiritual exercises?

Father Renzi: Spiritual exercises were already done by the Desert Fathers, but those we call the classic exercises go back to St. Ignatius of Loyola, who began to write them in a book in 1522 and perfected them in 1548. The book by posing first fundamental questions: For what has God created us?

The object of the exercises, in St. Ignatius' thought, is to order one's life according to God's plan, as man was created to serve God and only through this can he attain salvation.

He recommended that the exercises be done in a place other than one's usual environment. There were in fact "houses of exercises," where silence and stillness helped the exercises to be made.

St. Ignatius took from the Bible the ideas for the gradual composition of the book of spiritual exercises, in which are reflected his feelings when finding the secret to discern the will of God. Hence the Bible is a fundamental text for all types of spiritual exercises.

It would take a long time to find all the passages of the Bible that [could be referred] to the exercises. I find one concretely in Psalm 118:47-64. The Psalmist tells the Lord he has scrutinized his ways and will direct his steps to the Commandments; he says he is prepared to keep the secrets of the Lord. Finally he asks the Lord to show him his will, given that the earth is full of the Lord's love. Analogous is the itinerary of the one doing the exercises, who revises his own life to direct it in the sense of the will of God.

Other references might be the Virgin Mary, who meditated in her heart everything that happened around her. Mary, in fact, listened to and meditated the Scriptures, linking them to Jesus' words and to the events she went discovering in her history in relation with her Son. Another is Jesus' invitation to the disciples to withdraw in solitude to rest, which is spiritually salutary. Finally, the reference to the Scriptures in the conversation with the disciples of Emmaus, so that they understand what happened in his Death and Resurrection. St. Ignatius' exercises go over the whole life of Jesus as it is narrated in the Gospels.

ZENIT: In a world such as today's which is so secularised, what reasons do you give to promote and practice spiritual exercises?

Father Renzi: [Citing Benedict XVI] secularization, which often becomes secularism, abandoning the positive meaning of the secular, harshly tests the Christian life of the faithful and pastors. ... Today it is a providential challenge to which convincing answers must be given to man's questions and hopes.

Spiritual exercises, insofar as [they are a time of] listening to the Word of God dwelled upon for a long time, allow one to discern the will of God and, conforming oneself to it, to overcome the mentality in which God is absent and, at the same time, to apply oneself to living in communion with God and with neighbor.

For this reason the Federation of Spiritual Exercises promotes the exercises and urges those in charge to plan exercises every year for each category of persons: priests, religious, laity, young people, the elderly, with a view to the renewal of Christian life, to give an answer to the serious challenges posed by secularised society and religious indifference.

"Don't ever forget that the exercises are an insistent petition, which the Church addresses not only to its sacred ministers, to men and women religious, to all consecrated persons, but also to those who wish to enter into themselves, to dedicate time to God with their soul open to the hope of finding him on their way, to love him and follow him more" (John Paul II, Audience to FIES on the 25th anniversary of its foundation).

In regard to the present importance of the exercises, Paul VI expressed it thus: "The practice of the exercises constitutes an invigorating and restorative pause for the spirit, in the midst of the dissipations of chaotic modern life, but also a school that even today is irreplaceable to introduce souls to greater intimacy with God, to the love of virtue and to the science of life, as gift of God and as response to his call."

In 1967 the bishops of Triveneto, Italy, wrote a letter on the "Validity of the Spiritual Exercises," and they recommended "perseverance in this apostolate, which day by day shows itself to be more important."

Without excluding the determination to experience ways that are adapted to our times, we insist "on the classic structure of the Ignatian Exercises, so valid and providential in their climate of reflection and profound silence".

Pietro Schiavone, S.J., "Il Progetto del Padre," pp. 12-13

This Week's Calendar of Saints:

Wednesday 17th March – St. Patrick (bishop and Principal Patron of Ireland) Was born very probably in the early years of the 5th century in Britain. He was taken captive at the age of 16 and brought to Ireland where he worked as a slave. His captivity had a very positive effect on his spiritual life. He escaped back home at the age of 22. It was obvious to him that God was calling him to return to convert the Irish. He studied probably in France, returned to Ireland c. 457-61 and made a tremendous number of converts. He died in 491.

Thursday 18th March – St. Cyril of Jerusalem (bishop and doctor of the Church) (315 – 386) He excelled as a catechist and administrator, and suffered exile in his fight against Arianism.

Friday 19th March – St. Joseph (husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary) The virtues of St. Joseph have been the object of ecclesial reflection down through the centuries, especially the more recent centuries. Among those virtues the following stand out: faith, with which he fully accepted God's salvific plan; prompt and silent obedience to the will of God; love for and fulfilment of the law, true piety, fortitude in time of trial; chaste love for the Blessed Virgin Mary, a dutiful exercise of his paternal authority, and fruitful reticence.

Seeing your life through the lens of the gospels – Luke 15:1-3, 11-32:

1. Like many a parable, this story makes its point in what seems to be unfair: the spendthrift son is rewarded and the elder son is hurt and angry. Jesus is telling us that love is a free gift, not something we earn by our goodness. This is true of human love, and is also true of God's love. When have you experienced this truth in the love you have received from others? When has the experience of human love prompted you to reflect on God's love for you?
2. After some time the younger son 'came to himself' and returned home. Where and when have you experienced a homecoming after a time of exile and alienation? What helped you to come to yourself and make that journey home?
3. The older son resented the welcome given to the younger son after his wandering and dissolute life. This contrasts with the welcome the father gave the younger son. Perhaps you have experienced these differing attitudes in yourself. What were they like for you? Where was there life for you or for others?

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The Deep End – Computing Truth:

The world's fastest computer makes 1,759 trillion calculations per second. Though faster than any human brain for calculating, it can't do the mundane problem-solving that Joe Soap does daily. Neither can it calculate what the important things in life are. Such things as meaning, purpose, destiny, friendship, service and love. Maybe that's because it doesn't have a mind of its own. But even humans with a mind of their own don't always calculate correctly either.

Take the prodigal son in today's Gospel. (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32) He has a mind of his own, but focused on himself. If 'garbage in garbage out' is the techno mantra for computers, then 'selfish in, selfish out' is the moral mantra for people. The father knows this, yet allows his son the freedom to act selfishly. Rather like God with us. If we don't use our head we'll suffer for it. Unfortunately, often so too will others. The father can object to his son's demand, but doesn't. He acknowledges that his son is a free agent. So he gets his way. Not surprisingly, it's the way to disaster. Back he comes to his father the wiser for a lesson that only life can teach him.

Wisdom doesn't come from machines, even from supercomputers that use 147,456 processors to simulate just 1 per cent of the human brain. The director of America's National Science Foundation claims that supercomputers 'let you get closer to the truth.' Good to know! Yet even better is to know that when you accept God's word without calculation you find real truth even more quickly.

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Questions people ask:

- Q. When people have a run of accidents or bad luck is it a sign of God punishing them for past sins?
- A. The notion that God punishes us with misfortunes is not what Jesus taught. See his response to your question in today's gospel. The victims of Pilate's savage reprisal and those who were crushed when a tower collapsed at Siloam were no worse than other people. God might permit something to happen to bring people to their senses in an act of loving correction. But God is not in the business of dishing out punishment. As today's psalm puts it, the Lord is compassion and love.

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