

MAR 7-8, 2020



## OUR LADY, QUEEN OF THE YOUGH CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

*Pennsylvania Charitable Trusts*

*Our vision is to lead all whose lives we touch  
into a living relationship with the person of  
Jesus Christ through Word and Sacrament,  
Service and Fellowship.*

**[www.youghcatholic.org](http://www.youghcatholic.org)**

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people  
and your father's household to the land I will show you.  
I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

— FAITH OVER FEAR —  
**ABRAHAM**

**SO ABRAM WENT, AS THE LORD HAD TOLD HIM.**

**To our visitors ...** If you are just passing through, we are glad you chose to worship with us. If you are seeking a new church home, please know there is always room in our pews and a place in our hearts for you.

### DEVIVO CENTRE

116 South 2nd Street  
Connellsville, PA 15425

724.628.6840 (f) 724.628.0838

MON-THU 8:30am-noon / 1-4pm  
FRI 8:30am-1pm

### BRADY CENTRE

459 Ranch Road  
Dunbar, PA 15431

724.277.4236 (f) 724.277.8954

MON, TUE, THU, FRI 9am-3pm

**SATs 5:15-5:45pm at IC**

*Confession*

**and by appointment**

**We work with the Holy Trinity Conference of Saint Vincent DePaul** to help our neighbors in need. Their number is 724.562.3341.

**We are grateful for the advertisers** who cover the cost of printing our bulletins.

Please frequent their businesses in support of them.

This week's featured advertiser is SERVPRO.

Our Faith Community consists of the Parish Families of Immaculate Conception, Connellsville (1869), Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, Dunbar (1874), Saint John the Evangelist, Connellsville (1895), and Saint Rita of Cascia, Connellsville (1915).



We also embrace the former Parish Families of Saint Vincent de Paul, Leisenring (1888-2008), Sacred Heart, Dawson (1889-2007) Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Connellsville (1901-1913), Saint Emory, Connellsville (1903-1970), Holy Trinity, Connellsville (1903-2008), Saint Polycarp, West Leisenring (1917-1997).

## OUR STAFF - WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

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## SAT-SUN, FEB 29-MAR 1, 2020 STEWARDSHIP OF TREASURE

### IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Adult.....	\$5,406.00
Loose.....	375.95
Maintenance.....	377.00
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>\$6,158.95</b>

Cemetery .....	\$23.00
Ash Wednesday.....	\$894.00
Accent.....	\$60.00
Home Missions .....	\$371.00



### ST. ALOYSIUS

Adult.....	\$3,448.00
Loose.....	56.00
Children/Young Adults .....	26.00
Parish Improvements.....	100.00
Energy .....	50.00
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>\$3,680.00</b>

Ash Wednesday.....	\$441.00
Accent.....	\$5.00
Home Missions .....	\$356.00



### ST. JOHN

Adult.....	\$2,683.00
Loose Collection .....	110.00
Maintenance.....	339.00
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>\$3,132.00</b>

Cemetery .....	\$20.00
Ash Wednesday.....	\$616.00
Accent.....	\$40.00
Home Missions .....	\$225.00



### ST. RITA

Adult.....	\$4,592.00
Loose Collection .....	1,209.00
Maintenance.....	387.00
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>\$6,188.00</b>

Cemetery .....	\$67.00
Ash Wednesday.....	872.00
Lent.....	\$110.00
Accent.....	\$64.00
Home Missions .....	\$276.00

Just a reminder that in your current collection packet there is an envelope for Easter flowers. A Mass will be offered on Easter SUN for the intention of those who donated for these flowers.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of MARGARET CHURRAY, who died recently. May her soul and the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in eternal peace.



## Genesis 12:1-4a AN ACT OF FAITH

"Abram went." Those two words may not sound like much, but they set in motion the entire story of God's chosen people.

God made a big promise to Abram. God promised to make him the father of a great nation, to have his name revered in blessings, to side with his friends, and to bring an end to his enemies. Who could refuse such a deal?

God asked only one thing of Abram. God asked him to go. Abram had been living in Ur, in modern-day Iraq. He probably had a very comfortable arrangement with property and family of his own. But God had other ideas.

God wanted Abram to inhabit another place, where his family could prosper in number, productivity, and faith. These blessings would be his if Abram would just go.

Abram went. In that simple act of obedience, he demonstrated the hugeness of his faith and the stubbornness of his trust. In that simple act, he became the beneficiary of God's great promise.

God may be asking you to go, to leave some place of comfort, to cross the threshold of a land you do not know, to believe that greater promises lie beyond. God needs only some sign of faith and trust.

*Lectionary Bulletin Inserts: Reflections on the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Readings, Year A © 2019 Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications. All rights reserved. Written by Paul Turner. Lectionary for Mass © 2001, CCD.*



*Grow in the Lord*

2020  
Diocesan  
Lenten  
Appeal

Just like a plant needs sunlight, water and nutrients to grow, every Christian needs certain elements of faith in order to Grow in the Lord. During the Lenten season, we work to deepen our relationship with the Lord through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. With that in mind, please consider sharing your blessings to help our faith community Grow in the Lord.

**We have begun our annual Diocesan Lenten Appeal for all 4 of our parishes.**

Through this action we provide financial support for the ministries, activities and services made possible throughout the Diocese of Greensburg. The funds raised through this appeal allow churches to make real impacts on the lives of many people. Again this year I ask for your sincere gifts to this campaign. We ask that your pledge cards be placed in the offertory basket at any weekend Mass or sent directly to the parish offices. *Please mark the outside of your envelope with the name of your home church.* Our goal is to complete this appeal within the Lenten Season, but we need your help and support to do so. Please prayerfully consider your DLA pledge. Thank you, Fr. Paul

## SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK:

MON: Dn 9:4b-10; Ps 79:8, 9, 11, 13; Lk 6:36-38

TUE: Is 1:10, 16-20; Ps 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21, 23; Mt 23:1-12

WED: Jer 18:18-20; Ps 31:5-6, 14-16; Mt 20:17-28

THU: Jer 17:5-10; Ps 1:1-4, 6; Lk 16:19-31

FRI: Gn 37:3-4, 12-13a; 17b-28a; Ps 105:16-21; Mt 21:33-43, 45-46

SAT: Mi 7:14-15, 18-20; Ps 103:1-4, 9-12; Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

SUN: Ex 17:3-7; Ps 95:1-2, 6-9; Rom 5:1-2, 5-8; Jn 4:5-42 [5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42]



## WAYS TO ENHANCE YOUR LENT:

### HOLY HOUR/EVENING PRAYER

MONs at IC - 5:30-6:30pm

### STATIONS OF THE CROSS

MONs at SA - 6pm

WEDs at IC - 12:10pm

FRI at SJ - 6:30pm

### CVLLE MINISTERIUM LUNCHE

TUEs - noon-1pm

at Cvlle Presbyterian Church

701 S Pittsburgh Street

Prayer/reflection by local clergy

plus a free light meal

(free-will offerings welcome)

### ADULT FAITH ENRICHMENT

TUEs, MAR 10, 24, 31 at SJ - 6:30pm

with Sisters of Charity from Seton Hill

### ADORATION

WED's at SR - 8:30am-6pm

### EVENING MASS

WEDs at SR - 6pm

### BIBLE STUDIES

WEDs at IC - 6:30-8pm

FRI at SA - 9-10am

### GETTING MORE OUT OF YOUR MINISTRIES

WEDs at SR - 6:45-7:30pm

Fr. Dan's series especially for Choir,  
Lectors, Cantors, Eucharistic Ministers

### ADDITIONAL TIMES OF CONFESSION

Next week will be

SAT, MAR 14 at SA - 11:30am

### REGIONAL Penance SERVICES

Next one will be MON, MAR 23

at St. Florian in United - 7pm

## MASS SCHEDULE & INTENTIONS

### SAT, MAR 7 VIGIL/STS. PERPETUA & FELICITY, MARTYRS

4:00pm SR Frank & Thelma Hardy (Dick & Jackie Hardy)

5:00pm SA Bob LaFisca (Paul & Rosemary Bosetti)

6:00pm IC Charles Porter (Edward & Stephanie Zadyak)

### SUN, MAR 8 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

8:00am SR George A. Rudolph, Jr. (Family)

9:00am SA Mildred Tabaj (John & Ruth Tabaj)

9:30am IC Pro Populo

11:30am SJ Joseph A. Speeney (Children & Grandchildren)

### MON, MAR 9 ST. FRANCES OF ROME

8:00am SR John Canada (Geibel Class of 1967)

8:30am SA Genevieve Logan (Sandra Lincoln)

5:30pm IC Holy Hour & Evening Prayer

6:00pm SA Stations of the Cross

### TUE, MAR 10 LENTEN WEEKDAY

8:00am SJ Adam & Sophia Gmitter (The Heinbaugh Family)

8:30am SA Dylan Tristani (Regina Hughes & Jeff & Ryan Butela)

### WED, MAR 11 LENTEN WEEKDAY

8:00am SR Joyce Vilella (M/M Thomas Smith)

8:30am SR Adoration until 6pm.

12:10pm IC Stations of the Cross

6:00pm SR David Mohler (Wife & Family)

### THU, MAR 12 LENTEN WEEKDAY

8:00am IC Patricia Broderick (Bob Broderick & Family)

8:00am SA Prayers for Priests & Padre Pio Devotions

8:30am SA John "Jay" Orazi (Pat & Ann Trimbath)

### FRI, MAR 13 LENTEN WEEKDAY

8:00am SR Lou Durbin (Ruth Ward)

8:15am SA Divine Mercy Chaplet

8:30am SA Tony Colatch (Eleanor Balena)

9:30am IC Bill Swan, Jr. (Stephanie & Maria Connell)

Conn-Area

6:30pm SJ Stations of the Cross

### SAT, MAR 14

11:30am SA Confession

VIGIL

4:00pm SR Micheline Natale (The Don Natale Family)

5:00pm SA Connie Kelly (The Misconin Family)

6:00pm IC Pro Populo

### SUN, MAR 15 3RD SUNDAY OF LENT

8:00am SR Anthony Dellavechia (Family)

9:00am SA Rose Novak (Stella & Tim Martin)

9:30am IC Bernard & Elizabeth Farris (Children)

11:30am SJ Lettie Perez (Husband, Children & Grandchildren)

### MINISTRY SCHEDULE - MAR 14

	SR-4PM	ST. AL-5PM	IC-6PM
ACOLYTES/ SERVERS	R Specht E Rittenhouse	A Sampey E Bohinski	K Heckman L Heckman
EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS	J Rittenhouse M Pieczynski L Sparks	M Sampey M Vinoverski T Bohinski	J Miller N Holonich E Aquino
CROSS BEARERS	H Specht	W Trimbath	G Holonich
LECTORS	M Dunaway	J Dunaway	D Mulligan
ROSARY		Volunteer	

### MINISTRY SCHEDULE - MAR 15

ST. RITA-8AM	ST. AL-9AM	IC-9:30AM	ST. JOHN-11:30AM
M Waggett T Barrett	G Zavatchan G Zavatchan	J Sapola L Keller	L Kalivoda K Burncheck
G Bohinski C Waggett L Kozel	J Grover T Grover S Smith	J Baluch C Baluch E Loyal	J Speeney B Knizner E Smith
E Kozel	A Mongell	L Tomasko	D DePaul
T Kezmarsky	G Heller	N Keller	S DeSimone
	T Grover		

# What's Happening at home

Plan to attend the TUE, MAR 10 Lenten Adult Enrichment talk at 6:30pm, in St. John's Moravek Hall. This week's topic is "Being a Mary in a Martha World", presented by Sr. Marie Theresa Rischel. Sr. Marie brings a wealth of experience from her broad background in ministry. Her bubbly personality and deep spirituality will pair well in discussing this subject.

Tom Severin's Bible study on the book of Job will meet in IC's Sciberras Hall, 6:30-8pm, on WED, MAR 11.

Fr. Dan will present a series of Lenten talks called "GETTING MORE OUT OF YOUR MINISTRIES", on WED evenings in St. Rita Church after Mass, 6:45-7:30ish. The talks will be themed around liturgical ministries, on the following schedule:

CHOIR-3/11 (THIS WEEK)

LECTORS-3/18

CANTORS-3/25

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS-4/1

All are welcome, but the messages will likely be most relevant to those who have served, are currently serving, or are considering being part of these ministries.



The St. Rita Christian Mothers annual Women's Day of Recollection will be held on SUN, MAR 29, beginning at 1:30pm at St. Rita Church. Fr. Dan Carr will serve as Retreat Master. Women of all area parishes are invited

to attend this devotional day, which will include a Time for Reflection, Rosary and Benediction (no Mass), followed by a catered dinner in Bucci Hall. Cost is \$18, payable in advance to St. Rita Christian Mothers, and includes a coffee/cinnamon roll break plus dinner. Please call Mary at 628-6832 by MON, MAR 23 for reservations.

Our next Foundations of Faith session is this WED, MAR 11 at Geibel, from 6-8pm for children K-5 only. Children should report directly to their classroom with their textbook.

Ladies of Charity will meet THU, MAR 12 in Bucci Hall at 4pm.

THU RCIA is on MAR 12 in St. John's Moravek Hall, from 6:30-8pm.

St. Al's FRI Lenten Bible study will be held on MAR 13 in the social hall following 8:30am Mass.

The Children's Choir will rehearse on SAT, MAR 14 in IC's choir loft at 11am. Children in grades 3-6 from all 4 parishes are eligible for membership. Junior/senior high students are also invited to serve as leaders/cantors.

The band "Witness" will share their music ministry during St. Al's 5pm Mass on SAT, MAR 14. Everyone is invited.

St. Rita Holy Name will hold a Pancake, Buckwheat, Sausage Breakfast on SUN, MAR 15, in Bucci Hall, 7am-noon. \$6 adults, \$2 kids under 12. Men are welcome to help set-up on SAT, MAR 14 at 9am.



Our next mandatory parent/child meeting for First Holy Communion is next SUN, MAR 15 starting with 9am Mass at Saint Aloysius. Our families will be going over the Liturgy of the Eucharist and receiving their communion banners.

St. John's frozen pirohi will go on sale on SUNs starting on MAR 15, before Mass from 10:30-11am and after Mass from 12:30-1pm. \$10/dozen.



St. Aloysius Altar Rosary Society will meet on MON, MAR 16 in the social hall at 6:30pm.



St. John will hold a Chicken Dinner in Moravek Hall on SUN, MAR 22 beginning at 12:30, until sold out. Dinner includes 1/2 a baked chicken, potato, vegetable, salad, rolls and butter, dessert and beverage. Cost is \$10 and \$5 for kids under 12. Take-out is available. A basket raffle and 50/50 raffle will be held at the dinner. If you'd like to donate a basket please call Carol at 628-9415 or Stephanie/Toni at 628-8878. Basket drop-off is in Moravek Hall on SAT, MAR 21 from 10am-noon.

IC Christian Mothers would like to give a big thank you to everyone who helped make their Fish Dinner such a success - the men who ran the kitchen and the ladies who served food and waited tables, all who helped set-up and tear-down, and of course everyone who bought dinners. And thanks to God for blessing our efforts.

St. John's 125th Anniversary "One Day Summer Festival" will be held on SUN, AUG 2.



Members of the Fundraising and 125th Anniversary committees, and parishioners Judy Keller, Erin Knizner, Stephanie and Toni Kostelnik, Vernon Ohler, John Revlosky and Diana Warner have formed a core committee to begin planning for the event. Watch up-coming bulletins for meeting dates and full festival details.

**IC is hosting a trip on SAT, AUG 29 to see QUEEN ESTHER at the Sight & Sound Theatres in Lancaster.** Cost of \$150 includes the bus, show ticket and dinner. There are only 48 tickets, so get yours ASAP. Call Guy or Patty at 628-0894 to make your reservation, or with any questions. A \$25 deposit, payable to IC, reserves each ticket. Envelopes should be marked "Lancaster Trip" and may be put in the collection basket or dropped off at the DeVivo Centre. Balance of payment is due by MON, JUN 1.



5 of our RCIA participants celebrated the Rite of Election this past weekend. They are pictured at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral with their sponsors.



**Congratulations to our RCIA candidates and catechumens who have now entered the next phase of the RCIA process known as the Period of Purification and Enlightenment.** The RCIA celebrates lots of moving and beautiful Rites during the season of Lent. We will be winding up our journey at Immaculate Conception parish. Our thanks to St Rita for the time we spent with you. During these upcoming weeks, we encourage you, to take an active part in the liturgical rites. Listen carefully to the words being said and especially to any explanation the priest may offer. Above all enter into the prayers and the experience of the elect as they pray through these solemn and beautiful times. You will be richly blessed.

**The Feast of St. Frances of Rome is celebrated on MON, MAR 9.** As a young woman, Frances had a very comfortable life. Her husband Lorenzo, the son of Roman nobles, prized her beauty and goodness, and they had several children whom they dearly loved. The family lived in a castle. There was just one thing that prevented her life from being complete: Frances wanted with all her heart to serve the poor. Most of the noble people Frances knew would have thought this a senseless desire, but her sister-in-law, Vannozza shared her secret dream. Dressed in the plainest clothes the two young women would take baskets of food to the city's poor. Lorenzo supported Frances' service to others. He donated money from his family's riches to the work. Frances

was so respected in Rome that many other rich women served with her. But Frances' life changed. Rome was split by war. Lorenzo and one of their sons were taken captive. Soldiers burned and looted their castle. Frances, Vannozza and the children remained in the part of the castle that still stood. There they cared for many refugees. When money ran out they sold their jewels for food and medicine, and later begged in the streets. Some of Frances' children died from the plague. Even in her grief Frances cared for others. Still today Frances is beloved in her city, and each year on her feast day, her family palace is opened to the public. Romans come in crowds to remember and honor her.



**SOFTNESS AND TOUGHNESS.** Many people do not like the beatitude that says "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth". They say that these days you have to be tough, that meek people are losers. Yet Jesus combined the two. He referred to himself as being "meek and lowly in heart". Yet who could have been more tough and courageous than He was in driving money changers out of the temple, or as he stood trial before Pilate?

The fact is that the meek may not be rulers in the short term, but they win in the long run. They inherit the earth. What does this mean for us? Actually the Season of Lent is a time of meekness where we humbly face ourselves as we really are. It is a time of moving carefully in a way that leads us to eventual fulfillment.

Perhaps a more acceptable term for meekness is "softness". This doesn't mean that we let others trample over us. It involves gentleness and receptivity. We need tenderness toward others *and* ourselves. People who drive themselves or others are abusing part of God's creation. Soft words of encouragement and gentle acts of self-improvement are so much more effective.

Softness finds a needed counterpart in toughness. Toughness is not hardness. Hardness, like rock, can be brittle and shatter easily. Toughness is more like leather, able to receive blows and spring back to its original form. Softly, yet with toughness, we need to push ourselves, but as in physical exercise, not to the point of real pain. Spiritually and in our relationships we need to be open to challenges, while keeping a sound, secure base. Lent is a good time for experimenting with greater softness, gentleness and openness, while holding fast, toughly, to what is central in honesty and lasting worth.

**With joy and thanksgiving to God, the Diocese of Greensburg announces that Bishop Edward C. Malesic has called Deacon Mark R. Dunmire to the responsibility of the Presbyterate. The priesthood ordination will be celebrated on SAT, JUN 6 at 10am in Blessed Sacrament Cathedral, Greensburg.**





## THE BEST LENT EVER 2020: A FOCUS ON PRAYER

Personally, I have never had an issue with fasting and almsgiving during Lent. It seems as though Jesus shows me every year exactly WHAT I should be offering com-

pletely to Him. However, personal prayer is something a little less clear to me.

I know that I SHOULD be praying more and more often. But practically what does that look like?

For someone growing up in the Catholic Church, thankfully a lot of that is "built in." We offer Mass more often during Lent. We pray the Stations of the Cross. We come before God in Adoration. We participate in communal evening prayer. Still, our personal prayer lives should also be transformed during this time. So exactly HOW and WHAT should we be doing on our own? Here are some ideas....

**MAKE MORE TIME:** You may say right away, "I don't have time." I get that. I also live in the illusion that I don't have time. But the truth is we need to make time. We need to focus on what is ACTUALLY important and rid ourselves of daily distractions. What distracts you? What do you waste time on?

**PRAY THROUGH THE DAILY READINGS:** Something that we should ALWAYS do (but don't) is pray through the daily readings. If you do not know how to find the them, they are available online at [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org). They are also listed in your Lenten Prayer Book that we all received at Church this year. Speaking of your Lenten Prayer Book, commit yourself to reading that

after you have read and reflected on the readings for the day. If you did not receive one, we have extra in the office. Please stop by!

**READ A SPECIFIC BOOK OF THE BIBLE FOR LENT:** Many of us have never just picked up our Bible to pray. Perhaps we are intimidated. Perhaps we don't know where to start. Something I have found helpful is to get a good Catholic Study Bible. You can learn about the history and background of the text prior to reading. Commit to ONE book and learn as much as you can!

**MAKE ONE SPECIFIC PRAYER YOUR PRAYER FOR LENT:** What is the one thing that you need to work on personally during Lent? Anxiety and stress? Fear and worry? Anger and resentment? Once you have an answer to that question, find a prayer to pray EVERY DAY during Lent that meets your particular need. Purchase a Catholic devotional, the Pieta Prayer book, or an App (such as iPieta).

**GET INSPIRATION FROM THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS:** There are thousands of canonized Saints, so start small! Find out more about *your* patron Saint. Two wonderful books on the Saints if you are interested are "Butler's Lives of the Saints" and "Saint of the Day" by Leonard Foley.

**WATCH DAILY VIDEOS/READ DAILY MEDITATIONS ONLINE.** We have so many amazing and free resources at our fingertips. Three in particular that come to mind are "Best Lent Ever" by Dynamic Catholic, "Share Jesus" by Redeemed Online, and daily videos from Word on Fire. Each 3-4 minute video is completely FREE and is sent to your email every day.

Christ's peace and Mary's love,  
Mary Sampey



**CONN+AREA CATHOLIC SCHOOL**  
*Centered in Christ*

**Presents....**

**March 7th 7:30pm** **Alice in Wonderland JR**

**March 8th 2:00 p.m.** **FREE ADMISSION**  
Please Bring a Canned Food Item

**Edwin S. Porter Theater**  
**Connellsville Community Center**

St. Pius/Visitation in Mt. Pleasant "Friendship in Jesus" program is SUN, MON, TUE, MAR 8, 9 (St. Pius) and MAR 10 (Visitation) beginning at 6:30 each evening.

St. Pius Fish Dinners and Specialty Pasta Dinners will be served on Lenten FRIs through APR 3, 4-7pm.

Singer-songwriter David Kauffman will present a "Song and Story Lenten Mission" on FRI, MAR 13 at 7:30pm at St. Pius. The event will also include St. Pius/Visitation choirs. Admission is a monetary donation. For info, contact Eric at 689-2581.

St. Florian Church in United will host 2 Virtus sessions on SATs, MAR 14 and JUN 6, from 9-11am. To register call 423-4432.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> THE WELL Men's Conference (open to men 18+) will be held SAT, MAR 21 at Westmoreland County Community College in Youngwood.

Register at [dioceseofgreensburg.org/THEWELL](http://dioceseofgreensburg.org/THEWELL) by WED, MAR 11. The \$50 registration fee includes breakfast and lunch. Questions? Email [THEWELL@dioceseofgreensburg.org](mailto:THEWELL@dioceseofgreensburg.org).

Please remember the people on our prayer list: Taryn Calhoun, Barb Check, Mason Collins, Joe Connell, Jim Garstecki, John Kowalczyk, Rose Mariotti, Doug Pirl, Karla and Kevin Tressler.





I have a mild, irrational fear of heights. I'm not quite sure when this started. When I was a kid I loved to climb trees (to my grandmother's

dismay) but at a certain point in my life something changed. Trees and ladders are now my greatest enemies. And once I was asked to go up in a tree stand – trees and ladders together. I did manage to climb up, but it wasn't pretty.

Sadly, this fear never got me out of cleaning or painting in my parents' house. I was the tall one. So I was often the one braving the heights, dusting the far upper corners of their spider webs and applying the paint in hard-to-reach spaces. Even after I studied the laws of physics in high school, deep down I was absolutely certain that the ladder would decide to tip unexpectedly at the moment when I least expected. Ladders are cruel like that.

While my acrophobia is mild and irrational, fears we hear about in the Bible are often not mild or irrational. The Greek word, *phobos*, means to fear (hence, the word "phobia"). While this word is used in Scripture in a human context it is often also used in a divine context. Many of the episodes that occurred in Scripture involving a revelation of the glory of the Lord instilled fear on those who saw it...and would likely instill fear upon us too. When the host of angels appeared to the shepherds on Christmas night (Lk 2:10), the shepherds had *phobon mega* – mega fear! (Personally,

I might have had mega bladder-control problems as well.)

But what are the words that we hear after the fear sets in? "Do not be afraid." The angels use this phrase to reassure the shepherds. We hear this phrase often in Scripture, especially from Jesus. He uses this phrase when he walks on the Sea of Galilee and the disciples think he's a ghost. He gets in the boat and says "It is I. Do not be afraid." (Mk 6:51). And, of course, we have the Gospel from this weekend: the Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John were greatly terrified by this revelation of the glory of Jesus. And once again we hear Jesus say to them, "Do not be afraid."

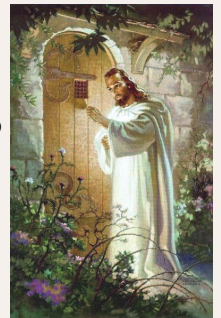
It may seem odd that one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit is fear of the Lord given how often God tells people not to be afraid. How can we explain that? Well, fear is often accompanied by paralysis, stopping us from what we are doing or about to do. A lot of the time this is good. Parents yell at and startle their young children to get their attention and stop them from doing something that will hurt them. Fear of evil helps us to avoid it. Fear of the divine is also good when it is accompanied by reverence and awe (the deeper meaning of *phobos*). Fear becomes problematic, however, when it paralyzes us and prevents us from moving forward and living our lives fully. When we think that something is scarier than it really is, we can feel trapped or locked up, and escape seems impossible. Many who suffer from anxiety, depression, or extreme phobias know what I mean by this paralysis.

Notice that in Scripture after each of these episodes of being told not

to fear, the person/persons immediately go out from where they were. The shepherds decide to go and see Jesus in the stable. The disciples on the Sea of Galilee, having been paralyzed first by fear of drowning in the storm and then Jesus walking on water, can move again once Jesus calms the wind. And the disciples at the Transfiguration, who were preparing to hunker down for the night, go and descend the mountain with Jesus.

Every time God tells us not to be afraid, it is to call us forward out of paralysis. In his very first homily as pope, Saint John Paul II famously spoke: "Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power...Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ." He is talking about the doors of our hearts. God is calling us out of our fears so that we can be freed from feeling trapped or locked up by the bonds of sin and death and enter the outward movement that is life-giving for ourselves and for others.

Opening the doors of our hearts to Christ can be terrifying – often we are not proud of what is hidden there. But God is not like a cruel ladder, just waiting for a single misstep to topple us over. He is a rock and strong support. He is a healer of wounds and a worker of miracles. When we let him in, He can free us from paralysis and help us to experience true freedom.



So be not afraid, open that door, and move freely.