

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT



**6400 Nativity Lane,
Burke, Virginia 22015**
nativityburke.org

REV. ROBERT C. CILINSKI, PASTOR
REV. EDWARD BRESNAHAN, PAROCHIAL VICAR
REV. JONATHAN BENNETT, PAROCHIAL VICAR
**REV. CEDRIC P. WILSON, ASSISTING PRIEST/
SPANISH MINISTRY**
DEC. RICHARD F. KELLY

SPECIALIZED MINISTRIES OF THE PARISH:

Adrienne Swidal, Parish Secretary
Ann Benson, Business Manager
Carlos Gutierrez, Facility Manager
Cat Sands, Pastoral Minister
Maureen Andersen, Liturgical Minister
Johana Brown, Parish Receptionist
Anna Marty, Receptionist/Baptism Coordinator
Caroline Chase, Receptionist/Bulletin Editor
Ayse Kenner, Mass Intentions
Alison Fram, Director of Young Adult & Family
Ministries/Social Action Ministries
Rebecca Judge, Director of Youth Ministry
Mary Castellano, Director of Social Media
Anna Lisa Licud, Coordinator Marriage Enrichment
Carole Fischl, Co-director of Music
Debbie Doyle, Co-director of Music
Mai Tran, Traditional Choir Director
Sara Prince, Youth Choir Director/Cornerstone Choir
Natacha Hines, Gift Shop

MINISTERS OF OUR SCHOOL:

Maria Kelly, Principal
Richard Godwin, Assistant Principal
Jen Behan, Preschool Director/Extended Care Director
Shannon Murphy, Administrative Assistant/Registrar
Kim Vu, Business Manager
Mary Helen Chapman, School Secretary

MINISTERS OF OUR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM:

Sister Donatella Merulla, A.R., M.R.E.
Sister Mary Attilia Todaro, A.R., M.R.E.
Maria Annmirati, Religious Education Coordinator
Fania Jimenez, Administrative Assistant

CATHOLIC CHARITIES COUNSELOR

Marguerite Turner, MS, LPC (703) 454-2415



PARISH OFFICE: (703) 455-2400
PARISH FAX: (703) 455-6832
NATIVITY SCHOOL: (703) 455-2300
NATIVITY FAX: (703) 569-8109
PRE-SCHOOL: (703) 455-2300 ext. 136
CCD OFFICE: (703) 455-0372
CCD OFFICE FAX: (703) 455-6832

SUNDAY MASSES: 5:00 p.m. Saturday Vigil Mass
7:00 p.m. Vigil Mass in Spanish
7:00 a.m./9:00 a.m./11:00 a.m./
1:00 p.m./5:30 p.m.

WEEKDAY MASSES: 7:30 a.m. Monday through Friday
12:00 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday
9:00 a.m. on Saturday

HOLY DAY MASSES: As Announced

RECONCILIATION: 3:30 - 4:30 p.m. on Saturday
or, if necessary, by appointment

BAPTISM: For more information and how to schedule a
baptism, please visit our website:
<https://nativityburke.org/baptism/>

MARRIAGE POLICY: Please contact the Church as soon
as you are engaged, and at least six months prior to
your wedding date.

BULLETIN DEADLINE: Announcements for the bulletin
must be submitted in **writing** by 9:00 AM on
Tuesday (5 days prior to publication). Please note: this
deadline can change due to holiday office closings.
You may email submissions to
bulletin@nativityburke.org.

WEBMASTER:
Emilia Hartline, webmaster@nativityburke.org

SOCIAL MEDIA:
Mary Castellano, socialmedia@nativityburke.org

Jesus said to
Nicodemus:
“Just as Moses
lifted up the
serpent in the
desert, so must
the Son of Man
be lifted up, so
that everyone
who believes in
him may have
eternal life.”

John 3:14,15

A Message from our Pastor Fr. Bob Cilinski



"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him"
- John 3:17

My dear parishioners,

Today the church celebrates Laetare Sunday. We are the religion of the resurrection, but our symbol is the cross. In the midst of Lent, we speak of joy.... the joy of the resurrection. It's a crucified joy. If the Son of Man be lifted up, He will draw all to himself. We rejoice in the Lord! It's the wisdom of the church to maintain our joy in the middle of Lent for in the end, sin is forgiven and death is conquered.

In the gospel of John we are told how much God loves the world. That love is shown in the sending of his Son. Nothing, not even death on the cross, is too much of a price to pay for the redemption of the human family.

Some see God as one to be feared... one who is angry with the world. This can be a great obstacle to a healthy spiritual life. St. Paul experienced the richness of God's mercy in his conversion from darkness to light. Paul was overwhelmed by the wealth of God's favor and compassion. He spent the rest of his life proclaiming the person of Christ crucified through whom we have been given eternal life.

Next week there will be a special opportunity to experience the healing presence of Christ during a Holy Hour and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with meditations and songs led by Mark Forrest on Wednesday March 20th at 7:00pm in the church. There is something powerful that happens when we pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. You will be touched by Christ's Word and Sacrament.

Our Lenten Penance Service is Thursday March 21st, from 6:30-8:00pm. Twenty three priests will be available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is a beautiful way to prepare to renew our baptismal promise at Easter. When we are asked at Easter to renounce Satan, his evil works and empty promises, our answer can be a thoughtful, strong and heartfelt *"I Do."*

Let us continue to pray for one another as we journey together to the Easter Sacraments, especially remembering our elect and candidates.

Love and Blessings,

Fr. Bob Cilinski

Fr. Bob Cilinski
Pastor



2024 Bishop's Lenten Appeal *"Behold, I make all things new"*

Thank you, Nativity parishioners, for your continuing strong support for this year's Bishop's Lenten Appeal. As of February 29, our pledges and donations amount to \$571,636 with about 12 percent of families pledging. That's 79% of our \$725,000 dollar goal! We're advancing well, but still need more participation. If you haven't yet pledged, please consider a sacrificial offering for Lent.

Your support helps the many charities, ministries, and programs throughout the Diocese and here at Nativity. May God bless you for your generosity!



SCAN ME

SAVE THE DATE

Please join us for a Night of Reflection with

Irish Tenor Mark Forrest

On March 20th, 2024 from 7:00-8:00PM
at Nativity Catholic Church,
all ages are welcome!



Nativity is a tithing community
Giving back a portion of God's blessings in gratitude

Knights of Columbus 2024 St. Patrick's Day Dinner & Dance

March 16th, 2024 from 6:30 - 11:00 PM

Come join the Knights of Columbus for the traditional celebration of the Patron Saint of Ireland at our Annual St. Patrick's Day Dinner & Dance to be held in the Father Martin Center at 6:30 PM on Saturday 16 March, 2024!

It is always a great evening of dining, dancing and entertainment. There will be a bag piper playing original Irish tunes, music for listening and dancing provided by a DJ. Bring your friends and reserve a table for 8 or 10 or meet fellow parishioners through designated seating.

You will enjoy the best corned beef dinner in town for \$40 per ticket. Children 12 and under tickets for \$15. Tickets will be sold on line via Tickleap (Link below). This event usually sells out so please get your tickets early!

For additional information, contact Patrick Bradshaw at PBradshaw2@verizon.net

<https://www.ticketleap.events/tickets/kc-council-7992/st-patricks-day-2024>



Did you know?

Our Nativity Rosary Ministry distributes an average of 8,000 mission rosaries a year to foreign missions and to our parish and local community groups. We also collect Old and Broken rosaries. If you have rosaries to donate there is a grey box at the back of the church where you can place your rosaries, or medals.

(no large crucifixes or written materials, please)

These rosaries are sorted, cleaned, and repaired and then sent to the foreign missions. If a rosary cannot be completed, we use the parts for chaplets and any parts not used are buried in the ground.

What you may not know is that our rosary ministry receives packages and boxes with Old and Broken rosaries, thanks to our website, from all over the United States. In the last few years, we have recycled hundreds of repaired beautiful rosaries.

If we are to continue, we will need your help to learn to repair old rosaries. You will be taught what you need to know. The day and time for 2 meetings will be decided by the group in the month of March. Once you learn our system you can work from home. If you are interested send your contact information to Diane or Lesleyanne at rosaryministry@nativityburke.org.

2024 AOH Gaelic Mass

The Annual Gaelic Mass in Honor of St. Patrick will be held on Monday, March 11, 2024 at 7 p.m. at St. James Catholic Church (905 Park Avenue, Falls Church). The Mass is organized and hosted by the Col. John Fitzgerald Division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH). Sean O'Riada Mass in its original Gaelic will be celebrated with organ, harp, and chorus accompaniment. The celebrant will be Rev. M. Valentine Keveny from County Mayo, Ireland. A reception will follow. Contact Alex Wilson (ajwilzn@gmail.com) with any questions.

Knights of Columbus Frenchy Cyr Memorial Scholarships

Once again, Nativity's Knights of Columbus Council 7992 will be awarding Cyr Memorial scholarships for Catholic high school tuition (grades 9-12) for the 2024-2025 school year. Scholarship application forms will be available in the later part of March. As a reminder entrants must be registered parishioners at Nativity, or a son, daughter, or grandchild of an active member of Council 7992. Questions, please contact Dave Zivich at davezivich@gmail.com for more information.

Interested in advertising in the bulletin? Call Mike Jurosky at 717-648-5996 or email: mjurosky@diocesan.com



Friday, March 22 | 5:30 - 8:00 PM

Limited Space available. Reserve your time slot.

Tickets on sale after Masses

on 3/9, 3/10, 3/16 & 3/17.

Dine in the Parish Hall or Take To-Go.

**LENTEN SCHEDULE****Stations of the Cross**

Each Friday of Lent,
in English at 7:00pm and Spanish at 8:00pm

Knights of Columbus - Lenten Fish Fry

Friday Evening: March 22nd,
from 5:30pm - 8:00pm, see ad in bulletin

Extra Confession, The Light is ON for You

Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation,
Each Wednesday Evening during Lent,
from 6:30pm - 8:00pm

Lenten Soup Suppers

Wednesday Evening
March 6th from 5:30pm - 7:00pm

**"Come Walk with Me" Holy Hour
and Meditations with Tenor Mark Forrest**

Wednesday Evening, March 20th,
from 7:00pm - 8:00pm

Lenten Penance Service

Thursday Evening, March 21st at 6:30pm,
many priests will be available to hear confessions
in English and in Spanish

LENTEN SOUP SUPPERS

5:30-7:00 p.m. in the Cafeteria



Stop by for
Confessions in
the Church from
6:30-8:00pm

MARCH 13

DONATIONS BENEFIT YOUTH MINISTRY

Teens in grades 8-12 can
volunteer by signing up on the
website

**SIGN UP TO DONATE SOUP OR BREAD**

Share a favorite family
recipe or experiment
with something new!

*Enjoy a simple soup dinner donated by
parishioners and served by our teens!*

Around the World and Here at Home, The Catholic Relief Services Collection Reveals Christ's Love to Those in Need

This weekend many dioceses in the United States will observe the traditional Lenten practice of almsgiving by participating in The Catholic Relief Services Collection.

Funds from this collection support the work of Catholic organizations that aid victims of war and natural disasters, help build peace in places of conflict, and minister to migrants and others with specific pastoral needs.

Contributions to The Catholic Relief Services Collection are distributed to these six organizations:

- Catholic Relief Services for international relief and development.
- Migration and Refugee Services for refugee resettlement.
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc. (CLINIC) for immigration legal services.
- Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development for advocacy.
- Holy Father's Relief Fund for emergency relief.
- Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church for evangelization and ministry.

By supporting The Catholic Relief Services Collection, you help these organizations build richer lives for faithful around the world. Thank you!



Subscribe to the MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT MINISTRY

MONTHLY FLOCKNOTE



Ana Lisa
Marriage Enrichment Ministry Coordinator
marriage@nativityburke.org



NO HANDS BUT YOURS MINISTRY

AN ORIGINAL NATIVITY MINISTRY DOING GOD'S WORK
BY SERVING THOSE LESS FORTUNATE MEMBERS OF HIS FLOCK.
WE WORK DISTRIBUTING FOOD, CLOTHING, AND PERSONAL ITEMS
TO THE POOR AND HOMELESS IN D.C. AND NORTHERN VIRGINIA
EVERY SUNDAY MORNING, RAIN OR SHINE.
FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT THE NATIVITY PARISH WEBSITE
OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN DAILY/SUNDAY
RUNS, PLEASE CONTACT JOHN RUBINO AT:
JOHN.ALBERT.RUBINO@GMAIL.COM.



MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT MINISTRY

CULTIVATING AN ENGAGED FAMILY

Date Night

Guest speaker
**DR. MICHAEL
HORNE**



Nativity School Cafeteria 6:30- 8:30 PM

MAR | 23rd | 2024

Dinner & Childcare Provided
To register or for more information,
please contact Anna Lisa Licud:
marriage@nativityburke.org



CONFIRMATION PREPARATION COURSE

- *Are you a Catholic adult who hasn't received the Sacrament of Confirmation?*
- *Do you know someone who fits this bill?*
- *Have you been asked to be a Godparent or a sponsor but are missing this key Sacrament?*
- *Do you feel like you want to know more about your faith, but aren't really sure where to begin?*

Nativity proudly presents a Confirmation preparation course, for any baptized Catholic adult who would like to complete the sacraments of initiation and prepare for Confirmation (happening right here at Nativity on May 19th).

Additionally, if you're a person beginning or growing in your faith and would like to know more, you are most certainly welcome!

You are invited to a 5-week "crash course" presented by the priests of the parish. The cost is free, the benefits are lifelong.

- *When? Tuesday nights beginning April 9th from 6:30PM to 8:00PM*
- *Where? Fr. Ready room (unless otherwise noted)*
- *Who? Any Catholic Adult 18+ who has not received Confirmation and Any other person would like to know more about their faith.*
- *How? Please RSVP to frbresnahan@nativityburke.org and we will see you on April 9th!*

Nativity Catholic Church

Holy Week & Easter Schedule

Holy Thursday | March 28

Morning Prayer | 8:30 am

Bilingual Mass of the Lord's Supper | 7:30 pm

Adoration | 8:30 pm - Midnight | Fr. Ready Room

Night Prayer | 11:45 pm | Fr. Ready Room

Good Friday | March 29

Morning Prayer | 8:30 am

Novena of Divine Mercy | after Morning Prayer (Church)

Stations of the Cross | 12:00 Noon

Passion of Our Lord | 3:00 pm

Via Cruz | 6:00 pm

Pasión de Nuestro Señor | 6:30 pm

Holy Saturday | March 30

Morning Prayer | 8:30 am

The Blessing of Easter Food | 9:00 am

Easter Vigil | 8:30 pm (Livestream)

Easter Sunday Mass Schedule | March 31

5:30 am

7:00 am

9:00 am

11:00 am (Livestream)

1:00 pm Spanish (Livestream)

ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC CHURCH



Multi Car Raffle

plus \$40,000 in Cash Drawings

*Only 4 weeks remaining
to sell your tickets!*

Tickets Only \$5

**Chance to win 4 cars and
\$40,000 in cash prizes**

Ford Escape



Ford
Bronco Sport



Ford Mustang



Ford
Ranger Truck



Images are representative of the models and types of cars to be awarded.

All tickets, stubs & monies are **due by Tuesday, 23 April to All Saints Catholic Church**. The drawings will be held during the All-Saints Catholic Church Fair on Saturday, 27 April. If you need more tickets or have questions, please contact PGK Sam Morthland at kofc7992caraffle@gmail.com

Nativity Stars
GALA
and Auction

Dancing Through the Decades (50s-80s) | April 27, 2024

EARLY BIRD TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

Cocktail Style Reception! | High Tops for Mingling!
 Reserved Table of 8 with 'Patron of Nativity' Sponsorship!

Food • Open Bar • Music & Dancing • Costume Contest • Photo Booth • Live & Silent Auction • Class Basket Raffle • 50/50 Raffle • Heads or Tails

AUCTION ITEM OF THE WEEK!
FOUR HOURS - HOME ORGANIZING
 Say goodbye to clutter and chaos with four (4) hours of home organizing with Get Organized with Lauren, LLC. From decluttering closets to optimizing storage space, Lauren will help you organize a space in your home to achieve a home that's not just tidy, but truly harmonious.

<https://nativityschool.org/gala>




**National Eucharistic Congress
 Indianapolis, Indiana from July 17-21, 2024**

Imagine you're a follower of Christ right after the Resurrection, and you hear some exciting reports: not only is Jesus alive, but he also appeared to his disciples, promising baptism with the Holy Spirit in only a few days! Wouldn't you drop everything to be there when it happens?

God is calling his people into a new "Upper Room." But this time, it has to fit more than a few dozen of his followers... This time, we had to rent out Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis!

Mark your calendars for July 17th through the 21st for the National Eucharistic Congress. At this historic event, the Church in the U.S. will gather in a way this generation has never seen—ready for the great outpouring of grace God desires to lavish upon his people. Tens of thousands of Catholics from all over the country are planning to attend, and it is our hope that members of our parish will be among them. The grace you receive will overflow into our community when you return home.

This is the beginning of a new chapter of Eucharistic faith in America, and the Congress is your opportunity to be a part of this pivotal moment in Church history.

Learn more at EucharisticCongress.org, and see the bulletin for more details on how you can help represent our community at this powerful event. Learn more at EucharisticCongress.org.



MASS INTENTIONS
"We are God's People"
1 Peter 2:10

Monday, March 11th

7:30 am † Elizabeth Keenan

Tuesday, March 12th

7:30 am † Claire Blake

12:00 pm † Wing-Chun Shum & Ping-Chi Yau

Wednesday, March 13th

7:30 am † John P. Rowley, Jr.

Thursday, March 14th

7:30 am † David Arens

12:00 pm † Helen Peck

Friday, March 15th

7:30 am † Concepcion Rivera

9:00 am Spec. Intention for Maria Mayers

Saturday, March 16th

9:00 am † Maribel Knappen

5:00 pm † Deceased Members of Keating & Keightley Families

7:00 pm † Marina Rivera & Ramiro Rivera

Sunday, March 17th

7:00 am † Emmett Michael Brouillard

9:00 am Parishioners

11:00 am † Mickey Mernah

1:00 pm † John D'Avanzo

5:30 pm † Angelina Diaz

**In prayer, let us remember
 the sick and deceased of the parish
 visit nativityburke.org for the Priest Mass Schedule**

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

The Prayer Shawl meeting for March will be held on Monday morning, March 18th at 9:30am in the Fr. Ready room. All are welcome!

HELP WANTED!! Can you count to 10?

Would you like to learn how to make Mission Rosaries? Please join us for our next rosary meeting on Tuesday, 19 March from 1:00-3:00pm in the Father Ready room. We will be making Divine Mercy rosaries. Red and white. Please sign up under rosary ministry on the parish website.

Nativity Job Opening - Coordinator of Youth, Young Adult, & Family Ministries

We are looking to welcome someone to join our ministry team, which is part of Nativity's very joyful parish staff. The Coordinator will support our growing and vibrant Youth, Young Adult, and Family Ministries at Nativity. This full-time position offers the opportunity to engage in direct relational ministry with the young people of our Church.

To apply, see the job opening on our website:

<https://nativityburke.org/nativity-jobs/>

Nativity Catholic Church

EASTER EGG HUNT

**Celebrate the Easter season by joining
Nativity's Family Easter Egg Hunt!**

Sunday, April 7 | 2:00 - 4:00 pm

Nativity Field behind the Father Martin Center

Please RSVP so we know how many people to expect:

nativityburke.org/easter-egg-hunt/

Families with young children are invited! Whether you have babies, toddlers, or elementary school age kids (older siblings are included!), we'd love for you to join us. One of the Nativity priests will share a message about the meaning of Easter with the kids and then the egg hunt will begin. We'll have three different hiding areas for the youngest, middle, and the older kids.

*Hosted for you by: Nativity's Knights of Columbus,
Family Ministry, & Marriage Enrichment Ministry*

Parish Office Holy Week & Easter Hours

The Parish Office will close
at 12:00 noon on
Holy Thursday, March 28th
and will be closed all day
Good Friday, March 29th
Easter Sunday, March 31st
and Monday, April 1st

Holy Saturday, March 30th,
the Parish Office will be Open
from 9:00am - 3:00pm

Have a Blessed Easter!

PRIME TIME SINGLE CATHOLICS (PTSC)

We are a social group, mostly age 60 and over. (35 to 59? Ask about our free associate-membership group.) Meet us for: concert at St. Thomas More Cathedral (March 3); dinner in Alexandria (March 10); Thursday lunches (March 14 & 28); St. Patrick celebration at St. Raymond Church (March 16); walk at Rutherford Park (March 21); feeding the hungry at Christ House (March 23); USMC concert (March 24); Easter dinner (March 31). For details, visit our website: bit.ly/ptsc. With questions or to RSVP, email Tom at ptscnva@gmail.com.



A Message from the Nativity Creation Care Ministry

Fast from Food Waste: Food waste is a big deal says Yale Climate Connections with about 30 percent of the food produced globally wasted every year and close to 40 percent in the United States. Here are a few tips from the Ignatian Solidarity Network to begin to reduce your food waste this Lent:

Make a meal and shopping plan every week, shopping your kitchen first to see what you already have—maybe even keep a kitchen inventory. Look up food scrap recipes to use up food you have left in your fridge. Institute weekly leftover night and come up with fun new meals from your leftover food. Buy loose produce, making it more likely you will use all of it before it spoils.

Learn more about composting at home or take your compost to the transfer station or farmer's market. Composting prevents the release of methane gas by keeping food out of the landfill. The composting process allows food to break down in a way that stores carbon in the soil that is produced. When the compost is ready, it can be used to enrich plants in your own garden, reducing the need for fertilizers. Even if you don't garden, there are often people in your community who would love to use the compost you generate.



Join us to celebrate our 50th anniversary!

DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON JUBILEE FEST



FREE EVENT FOR ALL AGES!

JUNE 8	MASS MUSIC FOOD WARREN COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS FRONT ROYAL, VIRGINIA	3:45- 9:30 PM
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Registration is required to receive complimentary food.

Visit arlingtondiocese.org/jubilee-fest for a full schedule and more details!




LIVING STATIONS of the Cross

Friday, March 22
7:00pm in the Church

Presented by Nativity Youth Ministry

Experience the passion and death of our Lord through a living tableau of the Stations of the Cross. This prayerful meditation—presented in English and Spanish—includes powerful reflections and music.



Celebrate St. Joseph's Day with the Nativity Italian Heritage & Cultural Society

On March 21 St. Joseph's Day is commemorated in many parts of the U.S. with specialty breads and festive foods. Our very own Kathleen Powers will lead the discussion about St. Joseph's Day. Two years ago, we learned about the history of St. Joseph's altars. This month, we learn about how much the Italians love their Saints and the Blessed Mother and how they are celebrated throughout the country and throughout the year - some observances were brought from the "old country" and some started in the United States. As always, a social hour follows. Please bring an appetizer or dessert to share, if you can. The guest fee is \$5.00.

DATE: THURSDAY, MARCH 21, AT 7:00PM

PLACE: NATIVITY SCHOOL CAFETERIA

The Knights of Columbus - Ladies Auxiliary

Formed to assist and support the Knights, our Church and the four virtues of Charity, Unity, Sorority and Patriotism. We are spouses, daughters, mothers, or sisters of Knights of Columbus who are in good standing or deceased.

Our fellowship and informational meetings are the First Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm in the Fr. Ready Room. Contact kdelatte65@gmail.com for information or to be added to our email distribution list.

Struggling with addiction in the family?

Both the afflicted and affected don't need to be alone. There are many resources available including AA, NA, Alanon, Calix and a diocesan chaplain. Call the HELPLINE (970) 989-2670 for support.

This is NOT LIMITED to addicts, anybody that would like to speak with a priest or a friend in Christ May call!



BROADWAY SPOTLIGHT

DRAMA BOOTCAMP

ARTS & CRAFTS FUN

ART EXPLORER

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ARTS

~ SUMMER CAMPS ~

JULY 8-19, 2024

Manassas, VA | Burke, VA

SpotlightSummerCamps.com

Do you need a ride to a medical appointment or to go grocery shopping and are unable to drive? The Shepherd's Center—Fairfax Burke provides these services. Feel free to contact the Shepherd's Center Fairfax Burke at 703-323-4788 for information.

Join Nativity CYO Track & Field!



Have fun and make friends as we run, jump, and throw!

Open to all 3rd to 8th graders!

Practices begin as soon as March 18th and will go through Mid-May!

Registration Period: March 10th to March 31st

Registration Fee: \$25

Registration Information:
<https://nativityburke.org/cyo-track/>



Email cyosports@nativityburke.org for more info!

YOUTH MINISTRY

LIFE TEEN: GRADES 9-12

DINNER - FELLOWSHIP - PRAYER & FORMATION

Sundays | 6:30-8:30pm

HIGH SCHOOL SMALL GROUPS

GIRLS: Tuesdays, 7:30-9:00pm, weekly

GUYS: Mondays, 7:00-8:30pm, 2x/month



EDGE: GRADES 6-8

Alternating Sundays | 3:30-5:00pm
& Fridays | 7:00-8:30 pm

LIVING STATIONS OF THE CROSS

LOOKING FOR TEENS AND ADULT VOLUNTEERS

Enter into the season of Lent by participating in the powerful devotion of the Stations of the Cross. No previous theater experience is required, and there are no lines to memorize. Reach out to cym@nativityburke.org to express your interest. Rehearsals begin March 10.

[See website for full schedule](#)

Before attending, please register for the 2023-2024 year of ministry using our free, online forms.

✉ cym@nativityburke.org 📱 [@nativitycym](https://www.instagram.com/nativitycym)

Every Friday, Come Pray the Pro-Life Rosary

From 8:45am-9:45am, when you are available, you're welcome to meet in the Narthex after any Friday 7:30am Mass and join us on the sidewalk in front of the abortion facility at 900 S. Washington Street, in Falls Church. Contact RickLoffredo@outlook.com for more information

Twelve Seminararians to be Ordained Transitional Deacons

On Saturday, April 6, Bishop Burbidge will ordain 12 seminarrians to the Transitional Diaconate: Timothy Banach, Emmanuel Carreño-García, Joseph Connor, Jordan Evans, John Fimmuchime, Raymond Goins, Andrew Lewandowski, Richard Malebranche, John Meyerhofer, Christian Njodzela, Michael Sampson and Alfredo Tuesta. The Mass will be held at St. Theresa Catholic Church in Ashburn at 11:00am and will also be livestreamed. Visit www.ArlingtonDiocese.org/Ordinations to learn more about these men, what led them to seminary, and about the ordination events. Pray for our future priests!



Dear Friends,

We would like to invite you to help decorate our parish home, Nativity Catholic Church, for Easter. If you would like to share in decorating our Sanctuary, please fill in the bottom of this flyer and drop it by the parish office after any Mass, no later than Friday, March 22nd. Your gift will be acknowledged in the Easter Bulletin. Please return the entire sheet and **PRINT NAMES CLEARLY**.

Thank you,
Fr. Bob Cilinski, Pastor

Please print this page, fill in the information requested below, attach your gift to this sheet, and mail it to or drop it off at the Parish Office.

Print clearly the information EXACTLY the way you would like it to appear in the Easter Bulletin. If you prefer to be ANONYMOUS, please check here _____ and only the special intention or the deceased name(s) will appear in the bulletin, NOT YOURS.

Print your name(s) or your family name CLEARLY the way you would like it to appear.

Flowers Donated by: _____

In Loving Memory of / With Special Intention for:

PHONE NUMBER: _____ AMOUNT OF GIFT \$ _____

Your parish envelope number (if known) _____



BIBLE STUDIES AT NATIVITY PARISH

Tuesday morning Bible Study: We meet from 10:00am-11:30am in the Fr. Ready room. This year we are looking at the Gospel and readings for Sunday, seeking to find within something which touches our lives and/or the world around us. Contact Miya Johnson miyajohnson@verizon.net.

Tuesday evening Young Adult Bible Studies: 6 weeks in small groups. At different times throughout the year, we offer 6-week long Bible studies where we encounter Jesus through the Gospels. We read three chapters of Scripture each week and come together to talk about it. We put you into a group and each group chooses where to meet, usually at a local restaurant or coffee shop. Register at <https://nativityburke.org/ya-bible-study/> Contact Alison Fram: afam@nativityburke.org.

Wednesday morning and evening, Walking With Purpose: Meeting in person. Walking with Purpose is a study program that aims to help bring women closer to Christ through Scripture. Meets weekly in person on Wednesday mornings at 9:30 am and Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm. Registration for Fall 2024 will be available in July 2024. Visit <https://nativityburke.org/www/> for details about the ministry or contact wwpnativity@gmail.com with questions.

Thursday evening Bible Study: Meeting in person virtually. Currently studying the Old Testament Book of Tobit, featuring the Angel Raphael, written a few hundred years before the birth of Jesus. Meets each Thursday from 7:30 – 9:00pm in person in the school's Art Room and virtually. Contact Deacon Dick Kelly at Deaconrfk@aol.com.

Friday morning Women's Bible Study: Meetings are Friday Mornings from 10:00am -12:00 noon in the Father Ready room. We are studying Galatians (Jan/Feb 2024) and the Gospel of Mark (Mar/Apr 2024). Spring sessions will be in person. Winter session will be on Zoom. Join us for prayer, study, and fellowship! Register for the next session at <https://nativityburke.org/womens-bible-study-registration/>. Contact Camille Pryor at wbs@nativityburke.org.

Viernes por la noche Estudio Bíblico: El estudio bíblico en español "Little Rock" es un programa conducido por el Hno. Pedro Del Aguila y tres asistentes. Este ministerio está en nuestra parroquia de Natividad desde 2014, alentando a los fieles a tener una mejor visión de la Iglesia Católica y crear en ellos un interés mas profundo en las sagradas Escrituras. Horario: Viernes de 7:00–9:00 pm | De Septiembre 8, 2023 a Junio 7, 2024. Lugar: Salón Fr. Ready Este ciclo estaremos estudiando: El evangelio según San Juan y las Cartas. Contactarse: Elba Pfeifer, elbitabonita@aol.com.

Saturday morning That Man Is You: Meeting in person. A men's program that combines Scripture with the best research from science in an engaging interactive program that addresses the pressures and temptations facing Catholic men in our modern culture. Meets each Saturday 6:50am - 8:00am in the Fr. Ready room. Contact Tim Yeager at yeagertd@verizon.net or Bob Sands at bob@sandmark.net.

Saturday morning Men's Prayer and Reflection Group: Meeting in-person/virtually. Men of all ages! We hear the scriptures every Sunday, but to what extent do we understand what God is telling us and how He is enriching our very lives today? Join us in reading, researching, and reflecting on Sunday scriptures and discussing how it relates to our lives and helps us become better Catholic men, husbands, dads, family members, friends, parishioners, citizens, and above all, intentional disciples of Christ. Enjoy the fellowship! Meet Saturdays from 8:00am - 9:00am in the Training/Cry Room or Virtually. Drop-ins are always welcome! Contact Rick Loffredo rickloffredo@outlook.com.

"Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ!" St. Jerome

Jesus and the Eucharist

NATIVITY SCHOOL TEACHERS' LOUNGE

3RD FRIDAY OF THE MONTH

February 16, March 15, April 19, May 17

6:30 PM Postlunch Dinner with MEM, Video Session and Reflection

For more information & to register, contact Anna Lisa please email: marriage@nativityburke.org

MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT MINISTRY

Sick / Homebound Visits

Are you or someone you know sick and/or homebound for any reason? We can arrange home visits from the parish and provide prayer and the sacraments. We would love to bring God's Grace and Peace to anyone in difficult times.

Please contact Cat Sands, Pastoral Minister, at csands@nativityburke.org to schedule a visit.



NATIONAL Eucharistic Revival

Jesus and the EUCHARIST



A SMALL GROUP SERIES FOR EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL

Details:

- Every Thursday through March 14 | 1:00 - 2:30 pm in the Fr. Ready Room
- Or Every 3rd Friday of the Month, Next Meeting March 15 | 6:30 - 8:30 pm in the Teachers' Lounge

OPEN TO ALL ADULTS IN THE PARISH

For more information, please contact our coordinator Anna Lisa at marriage@nativityburke.org


NATIVITY CATHOLIC SCHOOL
A Blue Ribbon School of Excellence
nativityschool.org


Cultivating Kindness

Here at Nativity School, we spent the whole month of February spreading Kindness all around ... around our



classroom ... around our school ... and we would catch students being kind. Each time we caught someone being kind, we added a heart to the Kindness tree hanging in the hallway. We got really good at it – and it was beautiful to experience. Whether it was a student holding the door for a teacher, writing thank you notes to others, taking turns at the water fountain, complimenting a friend, collecting donations for those in need, high-fiving friends in the hallway, to name but a few, the Nativity Community rocked the virtue of Kindness from beginning to end.



In fact, we ended the month with a special guest, a Nativity Middle School parent and author: Monica Phoebe Stoltzfus.

She spoke to us about her first picture book, “The Ripple.” Inspired by the beloved “It’s a Wonderful Life,” “The Ripple” aims to prove just how important each person’s simple act of kindness can really be. Stoltzfus told us how she got the idea to write it, and how we each hold a lot of power in our hearts. Kindness is contagious. Pass it on!



Is Your Child Turning 3 By the End of September? We’ve Got Just The Spot – In Our Classroom!
Email Jen Behan to schedule a tour of our classrooms, playground, and lunchroom – and to meet our teachers at jbehan@nativityschool.org. Please bring your child, too – we can’t wait to meet you!

Upcoming Dates At-A-Glance!

March 12 - Wendy’s School Fundraiser
March 15 - Summer Uniform Begins
March 15 - Half Day, 12 NOON Dismissal
March 17 - Read-a-thon Ends
March 25 - Student Living Stations, 1:45 - 2:45 pm
March 26 - 8th Grade Field Trip
March 27 - 3rd Grade Field Trip
March 28 - Seder
March 28 - Easter Break Begins, 11:30 am Dismissal

Join us at Nativity to see how your child would spend his/her days here - learning, praying, sharing, loving, and laughing. We may be just the school for which you’ve been searching!



Council Meetings - 1st and 3rd Tuesday. First meeting is a business meeting, the second meeting of the month is devoted to faith formation. Rosary 7:15 PM; meeting at 7:30 PM. Fellowship follows. Meet in the Nativity school cafeteria.

Linktree Universal Sign-up Link - Volunteer for an event! Scroll down to view all events.
https://linktr.ee/fr_sikora_council_7992.

Nativity Ushers - assist at collections - Volunteer for your Mass! Volunteer on Link Tree!

15 & 16 March - St. Patrick’s Day Dinner Dance: (several different positions need our support) Volunteer on Link Tree.

22 March (ticket sales 9, 10, 16 & 17 March) Fish Fry - Volunteer on Link Tree. **The signup to work the next Fish Fry:** <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080945AAAB2AA64-47373674-fish#/>

The signup to RSVP to eat at the next Fish Fry:
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/5080945AAAB2AA64-47904271-lenten>

6 April - Adopt-A-Highway - Be a part of the Elite

Eight: Volunteer on Link Tree.

7 April from 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm - Easter Egg Hunt Helpers:

We need four energetic volunteers. Volunteer on Link Tree.

20 April - Pilgrimage to Saint John Paul II National Shrine:

All Knights & family members are invited to sign up.

Food for Others: Volunteer drivers & vehicle support for food distribution to the poor. Occasionally deliver Thursday or Friday evenings. For Thursdays, contact Br. Mark Sawyer at sawyerkc7992@verizon.net. For Fridays, contact Br. Matt Stockbuck at mstock_w@yahoo.com.

Name Tags: Email Vince Augelli at VaKC23@gmail.com.

Sunday Mass Coffee and Cookies: We are providing coffee and cookies following Sunday morning Masses.

Handy Knights Ministry: If you are unable to perform basic maintenance tasks or small repairs in your home due to health or other factors, call the “Handy Knights.” Email handyknights@nativity@gmail.com.

The Fraternal Committee: Brothers helping brothers in need of assistance - Brothers and the families of living and deceased brothers in need of a helping hand, contact Br. John Landy at navyy8@yahoo.com.

3rd Degree Knights - Grow with 4th Degree: participate in patriotic activities that promote Catholic citizenship. 4th Degree Assembly meets the second Tuesday of the month in the Nativity school cafeteria: 7:30 pm rosary, 7:45 pm business meeting followed by fellowship. If you are interested, please contact our Faithful Navigator Vince Augelli at fn2996@vakofc.org.

Join the Knights! The Knights of Columbus is an international Order of Catholic men who are called to lead with faith, protect our families, serve others, and defend values in a busy changing world. Join today! <https://www.kofc.org/joinus>.

and experience the Knights free for one year: Enter the Agent Code “CPEREZ”, click “Add” and complete the form. Be sure to enter our council #7992 for local information when registering.

PVI Players and ITS Present

Rodgers & Hammerstein's

Cinderella

Music by
RICHARD
RODGERS

Book and
Lyrics by
OSCAR
HAMMERSTEIN II

March 22 and 23 - 7 p.m.

March 24 - 2 p.m.

Teatro Montini

St. Paul VI Catholic High School
42341 Braddock Road, Chantilly



CINDERELLA is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of The Rodgers & Hammerstein Organization.



Save the Date: Couples Retreat Day

One of the most important things you can do to strengthen your marriage is pray as a couple. And one of the best places to practice praying together is at a couples retreat! Save the date for our retreat and get ready to grow closer as husband and wife through the power of prayer.

Saturday, May 11th from 9 AM - 4 PM

TEACH 20th Anniversary Celebration

Are you connected with TEACH? Are you interested in helping to educate students in Guatemala? If the answer is yes to either or both questions, this Party is for you. Saturday, April 6, 6:30pm, St. Mary of Sorrows, 5222 Sideburn Road, Fairfax VA 22032.

Contact Joan Brown, 703-608-5059,
jogebrown737@gmail.com before March 31.

Your Chance to Help Refugee Families through Catholic Charities

Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services seeks your help to secure desperately needed household goods for our new arrivals. Donations directly benefit refugees settling inside our Diocese by outfitting their apartments with basic household necessities. Using our Amazon Gift Registry (<https://a.co/3CwyIQ9>), linens, kitchen, bedding, or other household items can easily be purchased. For more information, please contact Lourdes Iglesias at 703.719.8971 or lourdes.iglesias@ccda.net.



**Support Our Seminarians
Help Build the Future of Our Diocese
Make Your Gift Today!**



Mail your check made out to:
Foundation for CDA-SEEF
200 N. Glebe Rd., Suite 811
Arlington, VA 22203

CONTACT: John French • john.french@arlingtondiocese.org

To make a gift online:
https://arlingtondiocese.org/Donate_SEEF



FOR ADULT CHILDREN OF DIVORCE



ZOOM BOOK CLUB

Tuesdays, 7:30 - 8:30 pm
March 19 - April 30, 2024
Cost: free
Reading: "Life-Giving Wounds,"
by Daniel and Bethany Meola



www.arlingtondiocese.org/acodbookclub

Office of Marriage, Family, and Respect Life
Catholic Diocese of Arlington



Zoom Book Club for Adult Children of Divorce

This online book club is for anyone in Northern Virginia whose parents have been divorced. No matter the circumstances, parental divorce can affect us in all sorts of ways. Join our supportive community for this seven-week book club as we read "Life-Giving Wounds: A Catholic Guide to Healing for Adult Children of Divorce or Separation" by Daniel and Bethany Meola. This book club is free to join; the only fee is the cost of the book. Our book club will meet on Tuesday evenings from March 19 through April 30, from 7:30-8:30 p.m.

As we near the end of the book, we will plan an opportunity to get together in person. The book can be purchased at <https://www.lifegivingwounds.org>, <https://ignatius.com/>, or <https://www.amazon.com>. The Zoom link will be sent to you via email. Registration and the schedule of readings can be found here: <https://www.arlingtondiocese.org/acodbookclub>.

THE MARIH CENTER NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

The Marih Center, a pro-life pregnancy resource center serving families for 50 years, is experiencing an influx of new families (741 new in addition to our existing families in 2023).

We are in need of additional volunteers, especially Spanish translators. Our hours at the Center at 3230B Duke Street in Alexandria are Mon-Thurs 10:00am-3:00pm & Sat. 10:00-11:00am. We welcome your call and heart of service to help so many in need.

Please call Beth Gilles-Whitehead at 703-370-4774.

Good News

INSPIRATION FOR DAILY LIFE

4th Sunday of Lent

Sunday, March 10

2 Chr 36:14-16,19-23

Ps 137:1-6

Eph 2:4-10

Jn 3:14-21

Monday, March 11

Is 65:17-21

Ps 30:2,4-6,11-12a,13b

Jn 4:43-54

Tuesday, March 12

Ez 47:1-9,12

Ps 46:2-3,5-6,8-9

Jn 5:1-16

Wednesday, March 13

Is 49:8-15

Ps 145:8-9,13c-14,17-18

Jn 5:17-30

Thursday, March 14

Ex 32:7-14

Ps 106:19-23

Jn 5:31-47

Friday, March 15

Wis 2:1a,12-22

Ps 34:17-21,23

Jn 7:1-2,10,25-30

Saturday, March 16

Jer 11:18-20

Ps 7:2-3,9b-12

Jn 7:40-53

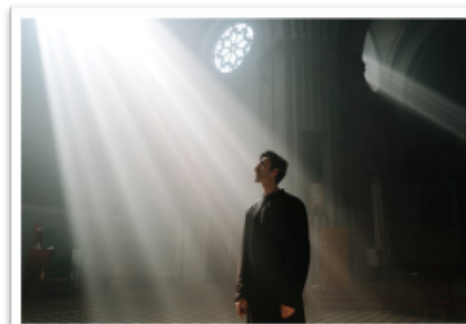
God's love is more than we can ever imagine. Through God's infinite and merciful love, He sent his only beloved Son, Jesus, to Earth to teach us how to love. He sacrificed his Son to suffer and die a cruel death on the cross to save us from eternal death and damnation for our sins and the sins of Adam and Eve. He sent the Holy Spirit to guide us out of darkness and promised that if we believed, we would be rewarded with true happiness in heaven.

What an amazing gift this is! Through our faith and commitment to Jesus, we can be assured that God, who knows everything about us, including our faults and imperfections, loves us and promises us salvation rather than judgment for our failings!

But what is meant by the words "everyone who believes in Him?" The action word "believes" is much more than merely saying, "I accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior." Real belief in Jesus involves turning one's life over to Jesus and His teachings. It means

making Jesus the center of our lives. It's a commitment to surrender one's selfish ways and to love others the way Christ loves.

It is still true today that many people continue to stay in the darkness rather than have their sins exposed in the light. Sometimes it is self-denial and they are afraid to confront their own sins. Other times, they don't want to admit to others that they are struggling. They fear that changing will be too hard. If only they would trust our most gracious and merciful God, who forgives and restores our souls when we offer our lives to Him.



We show belief when we come into the light and see, accept, and live in the truth of Jesus and His teachings. When we are true believers, our works of love will be Christ-like. Those who believe in Christ love Him and want to be like Him. Our good works will be done out of pure love and gratefulness for our God. Our belief – our faith in Christ – will go hand in hand with our actions – our works – to save us, and we will reach out to bring the Good News to others, too.

Reflect & Discuss:

- † How do you live your life in a way that others can see that you believe God loves you and He loves them, too?
- † In what areas of your life must you continue trusting in the love and light of Christ to transform you out of darkness?
- † How can you clearly and simply communicate the Gospel message of God's saving grace through Jesus to others?
- † How can you sincerely share your testimony to show your personal need for a Savior?



Find the words of Jesus.



Finish the words below using these letters.
Then read the verse.

ght en es ly ne th
tr at mes h ay
ever en th ough as

"Who _____ liv _____ by the _____ uth

co _____ to the li _____, so _____ at it

m _____ be se _____ plain _____ at

wh _____ they _____ ave do _____ h _____

be _____ thr _____ God."

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God did something very special for everyone
because God loves us.
How much does God love us?

Reading from left to right, write all of the 1's in order. When you
reach the last 1, return to the top and write all of the 2's in order.
Then return to the top and write all the 3's in order.

➔ 1- For	2 - gave	3 - Him	1- God
2 - His	3 - shall	1- so	2 - only
3 - not	1- loved	2 - Son	3 - perish
1- the	2 - that	3 - but	1- world
2 - whoever	3 - have	1- that	2 - believes
3 - eternal	1- He	2 - in	3 - life



Children's Worship Bulletin™

Ages 7+

March 10, 2024 • John 3:14-21

Light and Life



If you believe in Jesus,
God promises something wonderful!
What is it?

Add and subtract words and letters.

1.



- B D +



- K I +



- I G +



- B L =

2.



- G H T +



- A N

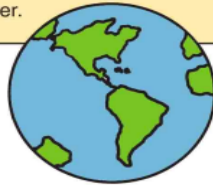
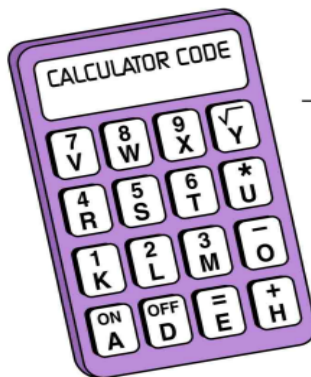


+ A R =

Why did God send Jesus to us?



Use the calculator to find the answer.

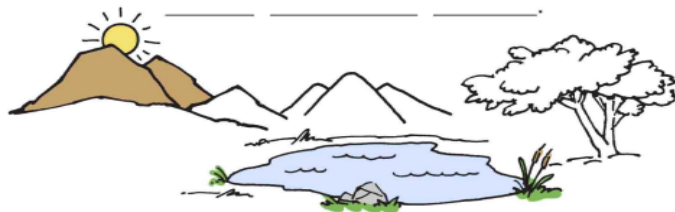


6 -

5 ON 7 =

6 + =

8 - 4 2 OFF !





SEMANA SANTA

Se Celebra en la Parroquia DE LA NATIVIDAD 2024



JUEVES SANTO, 28 DE MARZO

Oraciones de la Mañana a las 8:30am
Misa de la Cena del Señor: 7:30pm (Bilingüe)

VIERNES SANTO, 29 DE MARZO

Oraciones de la Mañana a las 8:30am
Novena de la Divina Misericordia a las 9:00am (día 1- en la Iglesia)
Vía Crucis: 6:00pm (español)
Celebración de la Pasión del Señor: 6:30pm (español)

SABADO SANTO, 30 DE MARZO

Oraciones de la Mañana a las 8:30am
Bendición de los Alimentos de Pascua: 9:00am

VIGILIA DE PASCUA, 30 DE MARZO A LAS 8:30PM

La Vigilia Pascual en la Noche Santa
Bendición del fuego nuevo, Iluminación de la Vela de Pascua y la
Celebración de los Sacramentos de Iniciación con los Elegidos y
Candidatos de RICA Y RCIC

DOMINGO DE PASCUA DE LA RESURRECCION DEL SENOR, 31 DE MARZO

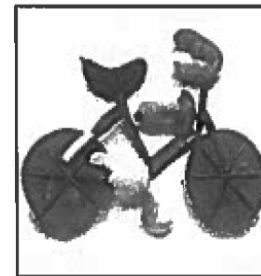
Misas a las: 5:30am, 7:00am, 9:00am, 11:00am y 1:00pm (español)
NO habrá misa vespertina el Domingo de Pascua

*La oficina parroquial cerrará a las 12pm el jueves, 28 de marzo y estará cerrada todo el día el viernes, 29 de marzo, el domingo, 31 de marzo y el lunes, 1 de abril.
La oficina estará abierta el sábado 30 de marzo de 9:00 am a 3:00pm.*

APRENDE TU FE

La dieta de la Cuaresma ¿Por qué no aprovechar el ayuno para quitarme los kilitos extra?

Por: Germán Sánchez Griesse | Fuente: Catholic.net



¿Cómo puedo perder peso en Cuaresma y tener un *nuevo look* para la Pascua?

Nos encontramos en plena Cuaresma y varios amigos y amigas lectoras nos han escrito preguntándonos si pueden aprovechar el ayuno cuaresmal para iniciar una dieta.

Difícil cuestión es ésta. ¿No estaremos confundiendo, como se confunde en la ortografía española la gimnasia con la magnesita? Si la Iglesia me impone el ayuno, ¿por qué no lo aprovecho, lo cumplo y de paso me quito unos kilitos extra y así estreno una nueva figura, un nuevo look el Domingo de Resurrección?

¿Para qué nos sirve el ayuno? ¿Es sólo una medida para pasar hambre, para privarnos de nuestros caprichos, de aquello que nos sobra? Entendido con esta mentalidad el ayuno cuaresmal se equipararía a las así llamadas dietas: junto con la dieta de la luna, la dieta de yogurt y fruta, la dieta de carbohidratos o la antidieta, podríamos inaugurar la *dieta de la cuaresma*. Fácil, sencilla y barata: pescado, menos pan, menos grasas, menos carbohidratos. Bajamos unos kilos y de paso cumplimos con el precepto que nos manda la Iglesia. ¿Se podrá?

Temo decirles a mis lectores que la respuesta es negativa. Que no es así de fácil, que no puedo aprovechar la barata de “pague uno y llévase dos”, que no puedo “matar dos pájaros de una pedrada”. Son dos cosas diversas, si bien es cierto que el efecto es el mismo. ¿Qué tiene de malo aprovechar el ayuno en la Cuaresma para comenzar una dieta? Aclarémonos: no tiene nada de malo, pero las finalidades son distintas, y casi me atrevo a decir, diametralmente opuestas.

Una dieta tiene como finalidad rebajar el peso que nos sobra. Algunos siguen la dieta por motivos médicos y otros la siguen por motivos no tan médicos, es decir por vanidad, para lucir mejor delante de otros, para causar envidias y querer ser el centro de atracción de su núcleo social. La finalidad de la dieta le dará su color moral, es decir la hará buena o mala bajo el punto de vista moral. Si sigo una dieta por motivos médicos, estoy haciendo un acto moralmente bueno. Si persevero en el adelgazamiento porque quiero agradar a mi esposo, sentirme bien conmigo misma para transmitir un poco de paz, de felicidad a mi familia y a los que conviven a mi lado, es un acto moralmente bueno, aceptable. Pero si sigo una dieta sólo para que me admiren, me envidien y hasta para provocar en otros deseos no tan castos... pues digámoslo claro, no es un acto moralmente bueno. Los resultados son los mismos, pero la intención es muy distinta.

Con esta misma óptica podemos considerar la diferencia entre el ayuno que propone la Iglesia en Cuaresma y la dieta que puedo seguir por motivos médicos o por motivos personales, dejando la connotación moral al juicio de cada uno y cada una, de acuerdo a los principios antes enunciados. El ayuno cuaresmal, como todos los ayunos promulgados por la Iglesia tiene como finalidad *perder peso* delante de Dios. *Perder peso* espiritual, se entiende. El ayuno implica una actitud de fe, de humildad, de total dependencia de Dios. Se recurre al ayuno para prepararse para el encuentro con Dios, (cf. Es 34, 28; 1Re 19, 8; Dan 9, 3); antes de afrontar una tarea difícil (cf. Jc 20, 26; Est 4, 16) o suplicar el perdón de una culpa (cf. 1Re 21, 27); para manifestar el dolor causado por una desdicha doméstica o nacional (cf. 1Sam 7, 6; 2Sam 1, 12; Ba 1, 5); pero el ayuno, inseparable de la oración y de la justicia, está orientado sobre todo a la conversión del corazón, sin la cual, como denunciaban ya los profetas (cf. Is 58, 2-11; Ger 14, 12; Zc 7, 5-14), no tiene sentido.

El ayuno en Cuaresma nos propone no sólo la privación voluntaria de algún alimento durante algunos días específicos, sino también la privación de algún gusto de alguna distracción (ir al cine, dejar de ver televisión durante un tiempo, etc) con el único objeto de volver nuestro corazón hacia Dios. No es la privación lo que importa. Lo más importa es que mediante esa privación volvamos nuestro corazón hacia Dios y nos preparemos para vivir con Él los misterios de la pasión, muerte y resurrección de su Hijo Jesucristo nuestro Señor. Sólo así el ayuno cobra verdadero sentido. Cada privación es una llamada para dirigir nuestro corazón a Dios. Me privo de este dulce, de este chocolate, o de fumar, para que mi corazón *pierda peso* y no esté tan atado a las cosas materiales.

Los efectos *exteriores* pueden ser los mismos entre quienes escogen seguir una dieta y los que optan por vivir el ayuno cuaresmal. Ambos al final estrenarán un *nuevo look* para el domingo de Resurrección. Pero, ¿cómo estará el corazón de cada uno de ellos? En un caso, habrá un corazón más lleno de Dios y en otro caso tendremos un corazón completamente alejado de Dios por el pecado. ¿Cuál de los dos corazones quieres estrenar esta Pascua de Resurrección?

IV Domingo de Cuaresma, Ciclo B.**¡Tanto amó Dios al mundo!****Autor: P. Raniero Cantalamessa, ofmcap**

2 Crónicas 36, 14-16. 19-23; Efesios 2, 4-10; Juan 3, 14-21)

¡Tanto amó Dios al mundo!

En el Evangelio de este domingo encontramos una de las frases absolutamente más bellas y consoladoras de la Biblia: «Tanto amó Dios al mundo que dio a su Hijo único, para que todo el que crea en él no perezca, sino que tenga vida eterna».

Para hablarnos de su amor, Dios se ha servido de las experiencias de amor que el hombre tiene en el ámbito natural. Dante dice que en Dios existe, como atado en un único volumen, «lo que en el mundo se desencuaderna». Todos los amores humanos – conyugal, paterno, materno, de amistad – son páginas de un cuaderno, o chispas de un incendio, que tiene en Dios su fuente y plenitud.

Ante todo Dios, en la Biblia, nos habla de su amor a través de la imagen del amor paterno. El amor paterno está hecho de estímulo, de impulso. El padre quiere hacer crecer al hijo, empujándole a que dé lo mejor de sí. Por ello difícilmente un padre alabaré al hijo incondicionalmente en su presencia. Teme que se crea cumplido y no se esfuerce más. Un rasgo del amor paterno es también la corrección. Pero un verdadero padre es asimismo aquel que da libertad, seguridad al hijo, que le hace sentirse protegido en la vida. He aquí por qué Dios se presenta al hombre, a lo largo de toda la revelación, como su «roca y baluarte», «fortaleza siempre cerca en las angustias».

Otras veces Dios nos habla con la imagen del amor materno. Dice: «¿Acaso olvida una mujer a su niño, sin compadecerse del hijo de sus entrañas? Pues aunque ésas llegasen a olvidar, yo no te olvido» (Is 49, 15). El amor de la madre está hecho de acogida, de compasión y de ternura; es un amor «entrañable». Las madres son siempre un poco cómplices de los hijos y con frecuencia deben defenderles e interceder por ellos ante el padre. Se habla siempre del poder de Dios y de su fuerza; pero la Biblia nos habla también de una debilidad de Dios, de una impotencia suya. Es la «debilidad» materna.

El hombre conoce por experiencia otro tipo de amor, el amor esponsal, del cual se dice que es «fuerte como la muerte» y cuyas llamas «son flechas de fuego» (Ct 8, 6). Y también a este tipo de amor ha recurrido Dios para convencernos de su apasionado amor por nosotros. Todos los términos típicos del amor entre hombre y mujer, incluido el término «seducción», son empleados en la Biblia para describir el amor de Dios por el hombre.

Jesús llevó a cumplimiento todas estas formas de amor, paterno, materno, esponsal (¡cuántas veces se ha comparado a un esposo!); pero les añadió otra: el amor de amistad. Decía a sus discípulos: «No os llamo ya siervos... a vosotros os he llamado amigos, porque todo lo que he oído a mi Padre os lo he dado a conocer» (Jn 15, 15).

¿Qué es la amistad? La amistad puede constituir un vínculo más fuerte que el parentesco mismo. El parentesco consiste en tener la misma sangre; la amistad en tener los mismos gustos, ideales, intereses. Nace de la confianza, esto es, del hecho de que confío a otro lo más íntimo y personal de mis pensamientos y experiencias.

Ahora: Jesús explica que nos llama amigos, porque todo lo que él sabía de su Padre celestial nos lo ha dado a conocer, nos lo han confiado. ¡Nos ha hecho partícipes de los secretos de familia de la Trinidad! Por ejemplo, del hecho de que Dios prefiere a los pequeños y a los pobres, de que nos ama como un papá, de que nos tiene preparado un lugar. Jesús da a la palabra «amigos» su sentido más pleno.

¿Qué debemos hacer después de haber recordado este amor? Algo sencillísimo: creer en el amor de Dios, acogerlo; repetir conmovidos, con San Juan: «¡Nosotros hemos creído en el amor que Dios nos tiene!» (1 Juan 4, 16).

4º Domingo de Cuaresma - B
Evangelio de la Misa: Jn 3,14-21
Esperanza cristiana

Luminosas y esclarecedoras palabras las que se ofrecen a la reflexión de los cristianos. Cristo es presentado como quien vino a salvar lo que estaba perdido, y además a que no perezca ninguno que humilde y sinceramente acepte la fe en el Hijo del Hombre. El no ha venido a condenar a nadie, sino a salvar al mundo y ofrecerle la vida eterna. Es, pues, un mensaje cargado de alegría y optimismo, como la Iglesia procura siempre transmitir a lo largo de la historia. Otras interpretaciones pesimistas o condenatorias de lo humano y de lo terreno son ajenas al mensaje cristiano de todos los tiempos. (Hoy puede leerse el pasaje evangélico del Ciego de nacimiento, ciclo A)

Señor, que te mostraste como nuestro Salvador y con un mensaje henchido de esperanza y alegría. Me encanta escuchar y meditar estas palabras:

“Tanto amó Dios la mundo, que entregó a su propio Hijo, para que no perezca ninguno de los que creen en Él, sino que tengan vida eterna”.

“Porque Dios no mandó su Hijo al mundo para condenarlo, sino para que el mundo se salve por Él”.

Me hablas, Señor, de perdón, de vida, de salvación, de entrega, de fe. Palabras que me infunden paz, sosiego, optimismo y esperanza. No puedo por menos de sentirme agradecido por tus palabras, y por ese panorama que me abres para mi vida de cristiano, que quiere santificarse y vivir como hijo de Dios. A la vez que yo quiero vivir esta vida divina de tu gracia y de tu amor, y con ese optimismo cristiano, te pido que sepa testimoniarlo en mis relaciones con los demás, y que todos los cristianos proclamemos a todos los vientos que la Iglesia es fuente de vida, camino de paz y concordia, hogar de amor y familiaridad, escuela de optimismo y alegría, de justicia y santidad. Sin duda hay algunos cristianos embargados por la pena, el pesimismo, la crítica amarga, y la desesperación por falta de fe auténtica, y de sentido humano y sobrenatural. Señor, que seamos todos sensatos y humildes, prudentes y “avisados” para no caer en esas tentaciones. Al contrario, que siempre me deje guiar por la fe y el amor de Dios, y nunca me falte el sentido sobrenatural de la vida.

Padre Segismundo Fernandez Rodríguez

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