Fourth Sunday of Lent

MARCH 11, 2018

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

John 3:16
FATHER COREY’S EPISTLE

♦ As promised, here is more on the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**What are the effects of the sacrament?** The Sacrament of Penance is a spiritual resurrection bringing us to life again after we were dead through mortal sin (Lk 15:24). It reconciles us with God in loving friendship and restores us to His grace. It is normally followed by peace, joy, serenity and spiritual consolation. The sacrament also reconciles us with the Church, repairing or restoring the damage our sins have done to our communion with others. The sinner also auspiciously anticipates the judgment that will come at the end of his life, choosing the path of life over the path of death (CCC 1468-1470).

**Can a priest reveal what he has heard to others?** No. A priest can never reveal the sins a person has confessed. This is known as the “Seal of confession,” which admits of no exceptions (CCC 1467). If a priest were to violate the seal of confession he would be automatically excommunicated (CIC 1388). Over the centuries several priests have died and many have been imprisoned because they refused, even under threat of torture and execution, to break the inviolable seal of confession. This is one of the most beautiful aspects of the sacrament and of the priesthood: the priest who hears our confession, in order to protect the secrets we have whispered to God through him, will allow himself to be imprisoned, tortured or even killed. That’s how seriously he and the Church take the seal and the sacrament.

**What if I feel nervous about going to the sacrament?** Remember, first, that in the sacrament you are fundamentally talking to God through the priest. God loves you, wishes to forgive you, and desires to embrace you with the joy with which the prodigal son was embraced in Jesus’ parable (Lk 15:11-32). Moreover, know that you will not say anything that the priest has not heard before. Do not be afraid. If you are nervous, please just tell the priest that you’re nervous and he will help you.

**What if I haven’t been to the sacrament for many years? How do I prepare? What do I say?**

First, don’t be afraid. Jesus said, “Heaven rejoices more for one repentant sinner than for 99 righteous persons who never needed to repent.” The priest will probably be so happy you’ve returned to confession after many years that you will make all the hours he spends in the confessional seem light.

Second, try to prepare with the help of a good examination of conscience sheet, but the priest will know that you cannot remember your sins with the precision of someone who came the previous week.

Third, get the largest sins off of your shoulders first. Fourth, don’t be afraid to ask the priest for help; most confessors are experts in leading someone in your circumstances through an examination of the “big stuff” in the confessional.

Finally, don’t wait. Come back to be reconciled to your loving Father, set off the celebration in heaven, and share your Father’s joy!

**I’m reluctant to go to confession because I don’t know the Act of Contrition by heart.** Confession is not meant to be a memory test (Thanks be to God!). It is good when Catholics have memorized one of the many beautiful acts of contrition, which sum up all of the sentiments and resolutions a Catholic should have in coming to confession. But if you do not know an Act of Contrition by memory, you can always express your sorrow and firm purpose of amendment in your own words, ask the priest to help you, or pray, “Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner who loves you!”

**What if I’m not comfortable going to confession face-to-face?** If you prefer to go to confession anonymously, that’s fine. Most churches have traditional confessional rooms or reconciliation rooms with the option to confess either face-to-face or

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kneeling behind an opaque screen. In Church law, both the priest and the penitent have the right to opt for the screen if for whatever reason they find that more comfortable.

**Can I be forgiven of the terrible sin of abortion?** Yes! Pope John Paul II once wrote to women in your situation: “The Church is aware of the many factors that may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong, but do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.”

Come, begin the process of healing. If you would prefer to confess to a priest who has experience ministering to women who have abortions, please contact Project Rachel (1-855-377-1351 or 214-544-2273, or email healing@prolifedallas.org) and they will put you in touch with such a priest. The Project Rachel website (http://hopeafterabortion.com/) contains testimonies from dozens of women who have found reconciliation and healing through Project Rachel and some very moving comments about the Sacrament. Project Rachel also offers an extensive retreat program.

**May I receive the sacrament if I’m divorced?** If you are civilly divorced but have not remarried or were validly married in the Church after receiving a declaration of nullity for your first marriage, then, yes, you may receive the Sacrament. If you have remarried outside of the Church or have entered into a cohabitating relationship, then those predicaments must be addressed before you can receive absolution. Pope John Paul II addressed this situation in 1981: “The church reaffirms her practice, which is based upon sacred scripture, of not admitting to Eucharistic communion divorced persons who have remarried. They are unable to be admitted thereto from the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church that is signified and effected by the Eucharist. … Reconciliation in the sacrament of penance, which would open the way to the Eucharist, can only be granted to those who, repenting of having broken the sign of the covenant and of fidelity to Christ, are sincerely ready to undertake a way of life that is no longer in contradiction to the indissolubility of marriage. This means, in practice, that when, for serious reasons such as, for example, the children's upbringing, a man and a woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate, they ‘take on themselves the duty to live in complete continence, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples’” (FC 84).

If you’re in these circumstances, you are encouraged to talk to a priest in the light of God about your present situation and possibly begin an investigation of whether your first marriage was valid.

**I’ve had a bad experience with confession in the past. The priest wasn’t very compassionate to me. I’m afraid this will happen to me again.** It is very unfortunate that your previous experience in the confessional wasn’t good. Most priests are very understanding and good confessors. Some are extraordinarily compassionate and very wise and can really help you grow in your spiritual life. It’s possible that the priest you had was having a bad day; it happens to everyone now and then. If you’re nervous about it, ask a friend or someone you trust to recommend a good confessor. We hope you’ll try again.

**I haven’t been to confession in many years. How can I possibly remember every little sin to confess from then until now?** You don’t have to remember every single sin. The Holy Spirit will reveal to you the most important ones for you to confess. Start with the most serious ones first and then go on to all the ones you can remember. The grace of the sacrament will “cover” the sins you can’t recall at the moment; although it’s important to confess them later if you do remember. A general rule of thumb is that the ones that are hardest to talk about are the ones, once confessed, that will help you grow the most.

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<td>7:00pm Didache</td>
<td>7:00pm Stations of the Cross</td>
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<td>7:00pm Adult Choir</td>
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FATHER COREY’S EPISTLE

Making a good examination of conscience is an excellent way to help you prepare for confession. 

The thought of having to confess certain sins, out loud, to a priest, makes me extremely uncomfortable. Will the priest express disappointment or shock when he hears what I have to say? You’re not going to shock or disappoint the priest. Every confession reveals something of the human condition, which the priest is very familiar with. He understands. Rather than feeling shock or disappointment, most priests feel great compassion and mercy. Your confessor won’t be disappointed with you. On the contrary, he will admire your faith and courage. If you do feel uncomfortable, use the confessional screen. It will help you feel a little less vulnerable. And remember, although you are confessing your sins to a priest you’re really confessing them to Jesus Christ. If you use the screen, close your eyes and talk to Jesus, it’ll be a lot easier.

Just a reminder that there is still plenty of time to go to confession during Lent. Here at St. Mary, we have Confession every Saturday at 4pm. And during Holy Week we have added more times: Monday, March 26 from 9:30-10:00am; Tuesday, March 27 from 5:00 — 6:00pm; and Wednesday, March 28 from 7:00 — 8:00pm. And don’t forget that Monday, March 26 of Holy Week, our Deanery (Our Lady, Queen of Confessors) will be having Confessions from 3pm until 9pm at the following Churches: Sacred Heart of Jesus (Danbury), St. Edward the Confessor (New Fairfield), St. Joseph (Danbury).

WEDNESDAY NIGHT PRAYER SERVICE Join us for quiet prayer at 7:00pm in the Notre Dame Center for our own personal intentions and for the whole world.

Our next meeting of the St. Mary MEN’S MINISTRY group will be on Saturday, March 17 at 8:30am in the Parish Hall. For more info, email Craig DeFreese at acdefreese@snet.net or Eric Keener at stmarys06801@gmail.com.

WOMEN OF FAITH will meet on Tuesday, March 20th at 7:00 pm in the Church Hall. Deacon John will continue our Lenten talks with Christ’s Passion. We will continue to collect items for Malta House in Norwalk. The donations from last month were most appreciated when delivered by Deacon John. Again, diapers (3,4,5,6) and other pertinent baby items are welcome, household cleaning materials and gift cards to CVS, Walmart, Stop and Shop, ShopRite and Walgreen, as well. A receptacle will be in the church hall for contributed items in case you can’t attend the meeting. Thank you for your generosity.

ARE YOU OR DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO HAS EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS?

Perhaps you or they have not been baptized, come from another Christian tradition, or are baptized and have not received Religious Education nor First Communion and/or Confirmation. The RCIA program prepares candidates to be received as members of the Catholic Church. Potential candidates are often found among family members of our Parish Community.

Our RCIA program meets Sundays after the 8:30am Mass. If you or someone you know is interested and has not reached out, please contact the Parish Office at 203-744-5777
REGISTRATION for the 2018-19 School Year is open. Once again, we anticipate strong interest and possible waitlists for some classes, so please register early. For information, please call the school at 203-744-2922 or email our Director of Enrollment, Linda Garvey at lgarvey@stmarybethelct.org You can also visit our website at www.stmarybethelct.org for school and registration information.

Now Taking Reservations: St. Mary School 24th Annual DINNER & AUCTION “HOW SWEET IT IS!” Saturday, March 24th at 6PM to 11PM. Grab your friends and come join us for a wonderful evening. The evening will include appetizers, dinner buffet & dessert, wine & beer, dancing and a live & silent auction. $50.00 per person or $90.00 per couple, for more information please call (203) 744-2922 or visit http://smhsabct.ejoinme.org/2018auction for tickets. Tickets will also be available for purchase after Mass on March 10-11 & March 17-18.

St. Mary School is seeking an adult interested in forming a MOCK TRIAL team at the school. Please contact Mr. Viceroy at GViceroy@StMaryBethelCT.org for more info.

EFFORTLESS FUNDRAISING Please take a look at some of our “effortless fundraising” programs that support our school. Programs like, The Amazon Smile foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to our school. Start here https://smile.amazon.com/ch/32-0445968 and the items you buy will also become a gift to SMS. SMS has also partnered with Shutterfly and every order placed here automatically generates a 13% (of purchase price) donation to SMS. Please visit sms.shutterflystorefront.com. More information and links to these and other programs can be found on our school website, www.stmarybethelct.org, click on Effortless Fundraising. Thank you for participating!

Please visit us on FACEBOOK at “St. Mary School, Bethel” to see photos and news of the latest happenings at SMS!

St. Mary School
Spring Didache
Series
The Sacraments
February 1 - Sacraments & Celebration
February 8 - Baptism
February 15 - Confirmation
March 1 - Eucharist
March 8 - Penance
March 15 - Anointing of the Sick

Religious Ed Office hours Tues., Wed., and Thurs. 9:30am-2pm
(203)743-4557

REMINDER There is a CONFIRMATION SPONSOR MEETING on Wed., March 14 at 6:30pm or Sat., March 17 at 9am.

When the Bethel School System cancels school, Religious Education is also cancelled. Please check on our website, our Facebook page, Channel 3 or Channel 6 for clarification.
**ON PALM SUNDAY & EASTER SUNDAY THE 11:30AM MASSES WILL BE HELD AT 12:00 NOON**

**PALM SUNDAY  (March 25)**
Masses are celebrated on: Sat. evening (March 24) at 5:30pm, and Sun. at 7am, 8:30am, 10am, and 12 noon**, 5:30pm

**CONFESSIONS**
Monday, March 26: 9:30-10:00am. Confessions will also be heard from 3pm—9pm at Sacred Heart of Jesus (Danbury), St. Edward the Confessor (New Fairfield), St. Joseph (Danbury)
Tuesday, March 27: 5:00 — 6:00pm
Wednesday, March 28: 7:00 — 8:00pm
(last opportunity before the Triduum)

**DAILY MASSES:**
(Mon., Tues., & Wed.) 6:30am & 9am

**HOLY THURSDAY  (March 29)**
7:00pm – Mass of the Lord’s Supper followed by Adoration until 11:00pm in the Church

**GOOD FRIDAY  (March 30)**
3:00pm – Celebration of the Lord’s Passion
7:00pm – Stations of the Cross
(Day of FAST and ABSTINENCE – no eating between meals and no meat.)

**HOLY SATURDAY  (March 31)**
12:00n – Blessing of Easter Food (Parish Hall)
(No 5:30pm Mass)
8:00pm – The Great Vigil of Easter

**EASTER SUNDAY  (April 1)**
Masses are celebrated at: 5:15am Sunrise Mass at Blue Jay Orchards (weather permitting — bring a seat & flashlight), 7:00am, 8:30am, 10:00am, and 12:00noon** in the Church
(No 5:30pm Mass on Easter Sunday)

**DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY  (April 8)**
Masses are celebrated on Sat. evening at 5:30pm and on Sun. at 7am, 8:30am, 10am, 11:30am, 5:30pm
3:00pm – Holy Hour including Song, Adoration and the Divine Mercy Chaplet in the Church
Dear Parishioners,

Welcome to those newly Baptized
Harper Grace Matthews

Offertory for the weekend of March 3/4
Collection: $12,523.00 On-Line Giving: $4,682.00

Online Giving is here at St. Mary! Reasons to sign up for Electronic Giving:

* No need to write checks or bring cash to church.
* Peace-of-mind knowing that the church is receiving your contribution even if you are unable to attend.
* More secure than checks.
* All contributions are recorded for you on your bank statement with date of settlement.

Visit our website www.stmarybethel.org to get started or go to www.osvonlinegiving.com/994 to register.

AROUND THE DIOCESE

DEFENDING OUR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY Recently, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has actively defended religious liberty in court. For example, the solicitor general supported Jack Phillips, the custom-cake baker, by arguing that freedom of expression for ourselves requires freedom of expression for others. Also, when the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority (WMATA) rejected a bus advertisement from the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., because it was religious, DOJ attorneys filed a brief objecting to WMATA’s religious discrimination. Legal motions like these are much-needed steps toward safeguarding religious liberty.

WHITE MASS for Healthcare Professionals and all who serve the sick will be celebrated on Sunday, March 18 at 8:30am by the Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano at St. Aloysius Church, New Canaan, followed by brunch at Woodway Country Club, Darien. Joseph Dutkowsky, MD, KM will address “Healing Beyond Healthcare”. Sponsors $100 (includes 2 Tickets), Individuals $35, and Tables for 8 $250. For more information contact Elizabeth Auda at (203)416-1636.

Another 40 DAYS FOR LIFE campaign is continuing through March 25th from 7 AM to 7 PM daily. We will once again pray in public for mothers who are contemplating abortion and for their babies to try to help to save more lives. Will you join us? God sees our witness; He hears our prayers; He transforms our world. Prayer Vigil Location: On the Public sidewalk outside of Planned Parenthood at 44 Main Street in Danbury. For more information, contact: Matt Donatucci, 203-778-0622 or mattdonatucci@sbcglobal.net or Peg Rozzi at loveisthechoice@comcast.net or go to https://40daysforlife.com/local-campaigns/danbury/

BROTHERHOOD IN ACTION is collecting food for the needy in our area throughout the Lenten Season. Please drop off your donations in the Parish Hall and be as generous as you can!!! Thank You!!

The DIOCESAN YOUTH PILGRIMAGE will take place Sat., March 24th at St. Charles Borromeo Church, 391 Ogden Street in Bridgeport, and will include an opportunity for Eucharistic Adoration, a chance to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a concert with Steve Angrisano and prayer with Bishop Caggiano. All young people in grades 6 thru 12 are invited enter the journey of Holy Week by spending some time in prayer with your friends and family. To register visit www.thechurchnedsexyou.org. For more information contact the Office of Faith Formation at 203416-1670.

AOH ST. PATRICK’S DAY CELEBRATIONS Sat., March 17 at 9:00am with Flag raising, Barnum Square and refreshments at the Municipal Center followed by 11:00am Mass at St. Peter. There is also a flag raising at City Hall at noon in Danbury. Corned Beef sandwiches & dinners will be served at the AOH Hall, 6 Lake Avenue, Danbury through March 17. Parade will be Sun., March 25 starting at St. Peter at 3pm. Corned Beef sandwiches also available after the parade at the AOH Hall. For info, call Meghan O’Connor at (203)733-3118.

OFF THE STREETS needs many hands in this ministry to help homeless people transition to a place of their own. Please join us on Thurs., March 15 at 6:30pm in the Congregational Church in Danbury. Park on the left side of the Church (across from City Hall) and upon entering the building behind the sanctuary, go to the Pilgrim Room. For more info, see the Off The Streets website at www.OffTheStreetsNow.com.

Our next meeting is on Mon., March 12 at 8:15pm in the Parish Hall. We will say the Rosary at 7:45pm in the Church. If you are at least 18 years of age and think you may be interested in joining our ranks, contact Grand Knight Tony Iorfino at (203) 744-2714 or email gkofpavia@gmail.com.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS APPLICATIONS FOR TWO SCHOLARSHIPS at $4,000 each awarded by Pavia Council #48, are now available. Eligible applicants must be an active Catholic, AND a resident of the Town of Bethel OR be the son or daughter of a member in good standing of Pavia Council #48 OR be the son or daughter of a deceased member of Pavia Council #48 who was in good standing at the time of his death. HS seniors may pick up an application at their school guidance office or at the Rectory. contact Bill Taylor at (503) 550-7176, or email william.r.taylor78@gmail.com for more info. Application deadline: Monday 4/2/18.

Thank you for your donations in the Parish Hall and be as generous as you can!!! Thank You!!

Peace-of-mind knowing that the church is receiving your contribution even if you are unable to attend.

More secure than checks.

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**READINGS FOR THE WEEK**

**Mon.:** Is 65:17-21; Ps 30:2, 4-6, 11-13b; Jn 4:43-54

**Tues.:** Ez 47:1-9, 12; Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9; Jn 5:1-16

**Wed.:** Is 49:8-15; Ps 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18; Jn 5:17-30

**Thur.:** Ex 32:7-14; Ps 106:19-23; Jn 5:31-47

**Fri.:** Wis 2:1a, 12-22; Ps 34:17-21, 23; Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

**Sat.:** Jer 11:18-20; Ps 7:2-3, 9bc-12; Jn 7:40-53

**Sun.:** Jer 31:31-34; Ps 51:3-4, 12-15; Heb 5:7-9; Jn 12:20-33

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**MASS SCHEDULE**

**Monday – Friday:** 6:30 & 9:00am  
**Saturday:** 8:00am & 5:30pm (Vigil Mass)  
**Sunday:** 7:00, 8:30, 10:00, 11:30am & 5:30pm

**RECONCILIATION**  
Saturday: 4:00 – 5:00pm

**STAFF**

Father Corey V. Piccinino, *Pastor*  
Father Robert Wolfe, *Parochial Vicar*  
Father Philip Phan, *Parochial Vicar*  
Deacon John DeRoin  
Kate Fitzgerald, *Parish Secretary & Bulletin Editor*  
Sue Dolan, *Parish Secretary*  
Julie Doerner, *Business Manager*  
Paul Orsino, *Property Manager*

**ST. MARY SCHOOL (744-2922)**  
Greg Viceroy, *Principal*

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (743-4557)**  
Mary Ferri, *Director*  
Maggie Kent, *Secretary*  
RCIA: Call if you are interested in becoming a Catholic or completing your initiation as a Catholic with Confirmation and/or Eucharist.

**YOUTH MINISTRY (203)744-5777**

**MUSIC MINISTRY**  
Michael Ferrari, *Music Director*  
Elizabeth Barnes, *Choir Director*

**FINANCE COMMITTEE (794-8512):** Bob Kozlowski, *Chairman*

**BAPTISMS:** Most Sundays at 12:45pm. Please call the Rectory at least six weeks in advance to schedule your Baptism and to sign up for the New Baptism Class that is required for both parents and Godparents. These classes are offered on the first Sunday of each month. Anyone requesting a Sponsorship form must be a currently registered and practicing Catholic, and they must attend one of the New Baptism Classes to receive it. There is a 3-month waiting period for a sponsorship form for the newly registered. The Catholic requirements for a Godparent/Sponsor are: you must be at least 16 years old; received the Sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation in the Catholic Church; attend Mass regularly on Sundays and on Holy Days of Obligation; receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion regularly; sincerely try to follow the moral teaching of the Catholic Church; and if married, were married in the Catholic Church.

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR MARRIAGE:** All couples must meet with a parish clergyman at least six (6) months before the marriage is to be celebrated.

**PASTORAL CARE AT DANBURY HOSPITAL:** Prior to Your Hospitalization: You or a family member should notify the Rectory.

**HOLY COMMUNION FOR THE SICK:** To any of those who are homebound or hospitalized and interested in having a visit by a priest, please contact the parish office. Anyone interested in serving in this ministry, please call Father Philip at 744-5777.

**PRAYER LINE:** If you or someone you know is in need of prayer, please call our Prayer Line. Our team leaders are Maggie Kent (203-731-4738) and Deana Chamberlin (203-482-7149).
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