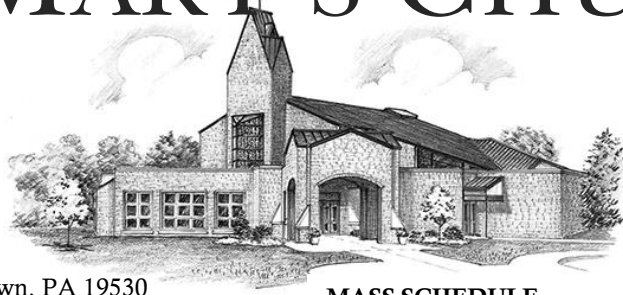


ST MARY'S CHURCH



14833 Kutztown Road ▪ Kutztown, PA 19530

www.StMarysKutztown.com

www.facebook.com/stmaryskutztown

Church, Meeting Rooms, Business & Parish Offices:

Phone : 610-683-7443 ▪ Fax : 610-683-7625

Email: Parish@StMarysKutztown.com

Religious Education Center: 610-683-6454

Email: RelEd@StMarysKutztown.com

PASTORAL MINISTRY

Pastor	Fr John Maria
Pastor Emeritus	Rev. Msgr Walter T Scheaffer
Permanent Deacon	Dcn. Howard Schultz
Coordinator/Religious Educ	Mrs. Ann Pergosky
Director of Music Ministry and Parish Secretary	Mrs. Anne Sitarik

PARISH ORGANIZATIONS

Ladies Auxiliary	Theresa Bieak & Deb Massa
Men of St. Mary's	Mr. Tom Cengeri
O C I A	Fr. John Maria

DIOCESAN INFORMATION

Diocesan Policies and Procedures on Youth Protection:

www.allentowndiocese.org

Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator:

Wendy S Krisak, Direct Telephone: (800) 791-9209

Office of Safe Environment Secretary, Youth Protection and Catholic Human Services: Pamela Russo, MSW, MS ; PO Box F, Allentown, 181-5-1538 Tele. 610-871-5200 x2204

Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service: If you have an allegation of abuse against a bishop, please contact the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service:

www.ReportBishopAbuse.org or 800-276-1562

MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday Vigil	4:30 pm
Sunday	8:30, 11:00am
Daily Masses	7:30am (Monday – Friday) 8:00am (First Saturdays)

ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT - Every Wednesday, 7-8 pm *and* First Friday of the Month, 8 until 9am

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM – Baptism is celebrated at various times, often 11a Mass, the 1st Sunday of the month. Baptisms are also scheduled privately upon arrangement with families. Parents must contact the Religious Ed Office to arrange Baptismal Prep sessions and learn all the details.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION - Saturday, 3:30-4:20p, Sundays 8:00-8:20; 10:30-10:50 am, Wednesdays 7:00-8:00p and by appointment

SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK – Those who are dangerously ill or facing serious surgery may receive this healing Sacrament. Please contact Father John Maria to make arrangements.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY – Congratulations! Couples must contact Father John at least six months in advance of desired date. Marriage Preparation is required for proper celebration of a valid and Sacramental marriage.

PROSPECTIVE GODPARENTS/SPONSORS asked to serve as Baptismal Godparents or Confirmation sponsor must request an eligibility certificate from the parish priest. To serve in this special role parishioners must: Be in full communion with the Catholic Church; Attend Mass weekly; have received Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation & Confirmation; Married individuals need be validly married in the Catholic Church.

Please contact the Parish Office and allow 2 weeks to process.

HOMEBOUND – Parishioners homebound and unable to attend Mass please contact the Parish Office to arrange visitation, to receive Holy Communion

HOSPITALIZED - Call the Rectory to notify of someone in the hospital so we can pray for and possibly visit them. Each hospital in our Diocesan boundaries is either covered by a local parish or has a priest on call at the hospital.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP - Welcome to St. Mary's Parish! Please contact the Parish Office to meet with Father John and become registered. We also ask those who move to notify the parish

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – Education for parish children occurs September 10 through April. Contact Religious Education office: 610-683-6454 for registration.

Center-based

- Levels 1 to 5 meet every week, Sundays, 9:40-10:50am
- Level 6-8 meet the 2nd & 4th Sundays, 6-8pm
- Youth Group (9-12) Stay tuned for upcoming events.

Home-based Arrangements may be made for select grade levels, contact Ann Pergosky



27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, OCTOBER 06, 2024

We are a welcoming community called to deepen and share our faith

0195-1

MASS Intentions

Mon 10-07	7:30a	Wes Kriebel
Tue 10-08	7:30a	Steven G. Woods
Wed 10-09	7:30a	Edward and Mary Ehrets
Thu 10-10	7:30a	Julie Belle Meares
Fri 10-11	7:30a	Leo and Isabella Fernando
Sat 10-12	4:30p	Deceased Kenny family members
Sun 10-13	8:30a	Fred and Catherine Wolff
	11:00a	People of the Parish

*Altar flowers thios week in memory of Tom and Jane Quirk.
Blessed Sacrament Candle in memory of Jerry Foran*

READINGS and CELEBRATIONS for the WEEK

Sun 10-06	27 th Sunday Ordinary Time-Gn 2:18-24; He 2:9-11; Mk 10:2-16
Mon 10-07	Ga 1:6-12; Lk 10:25-37
Tue 10-08	Ga 1:13-24; Lk 10:38-42
Wed 10-09	Ga 2:1-2, 7-14; Lk 11:1-4
Thu 10-10	Ga 3:1-5; Lk 11:5-13
Fri 10-11	Ga 3:7-14; Lk 11:15-26
Sat 10-12	Ga 3:22-29; Lk 11:27-28
Sun 10-13	28 th Sunday Ordinary Time- Wis 7:7-11; He 4:12-13; Mk 10:17-30

MUSIC MINISTRY

	THIS WEEK	NEXT WEEK
4:30p	Spanier, Chris Casey, Peggy	DeWald, Heather Moore, Mark
8:30a	Sitarik, Anne Cebenko, Steve	Spanier, Chris Moore, Mark
11:00a	Pirnot, Tom Skoronski, Katherine	Thomas, Cathy Talarico, Tim

Income OLG In Church Expenses

Income	OLG	In Church	Expenses
Regular Collection	\$3,665.25	\$5,388.65	\$8,828.91
Building Fund	\$35.00	\$1,000.00	
Capital Campaign	\$50.00	\$205.00	
Parish Partnership	\$290.00	\$295.00	
Church Latin America	\$25.00	\$890.00	
Other Reg. Collections		\$55.00	



HOW DO I SIGN UP FOR ONLINE GIVING?

1. Visit www.stmaryskutztown.com
2. Click on the Online Giving link
3. Complete the online registration form. It's that simple! For more info or help setting up your account please contact the parish office.

Please pray for the sick of our parish.....
..... and those that care for them



Logan Alkons	Bijou Greenwood	Diana Novi
Evie Barletta	Muriel Hadnagy	Joanne O'Connell
Caleb Bauer	Devon Hanna	Benedicta Otchere
Christopher Bennett	Jacqueline Hartz	Rick Padilla
Greg Bradford	Linda Haurus	Ed Pilarski
Monica Bradford	Kathy Henry	Pat Regensburger
Bradford family	Glenn Hertzog	Rosemarie Reimert
William G. Brady	Lillian Karch	Bill Pettit
Nadia Cahill	Michael Karch	Kerry Rauenzahn
Meaghan Clark	Joanne Kear	Patrick Ritter
David Covey	Jane Kern	Megan Roth
Nancy Devlin-Litinsky	Milton Kern	Nina Hertzog
Dave Ebling	Carol Korbe	Rundle
Trent Eidle	John Korbe	Richard Rusconi
Patricia Farabaugh	Henry Kryeski	Tina Scatamacchia
Ashley Geidner	Edward & Rosemary Law	Jim Sherman
Farhat	Rick Lewis	Barbara Shidisky
Paula Fehlinger	Julie Lindsey	Tracy Snyder
Florentine Firlein	Eva Malanczuk	Nicole Sosik
Joey Flecher	Dennis Martinsen	Arlene Stadalnik
Tammy G.	Barry, Sharon Miller	Todd Tanis
Joe Galantino	Elaine O. Miller	Ralph Touch
Michelle Galantino	Geoff Miller	Amy Turko
Sandra George	Shannon Morris	Christine VanDoorn
Lucy Ginsiorsky	Nikolette Nolte	Paul Vasko
Ken Gorski		Bonnie Wessner
		Colleen Wolff

Contact office to update list: secretary@stmaryskutztown.com

Please Pray for all those serving our nation

Keenan Albright	Charles Douglass	Nick Marakovits
Kyle Albright	Joseph Douglass	Melissa Marks
Michael Barron	Keith Essig	Laura Miller
Andrew Barthol	Ryan Flanagan	Spencer Morris
Frank M. Bieda	Kale Follweiler	Heather O'Donnell
John Boyer	Michael Allen Haak	Menaka Nayyar & Anthony Pirnot
Matthew Boyer	Diane Henry	Jake Schmeck
Jonathan Cardé	Cmdr. Jason Hoch	Phillip Talarico
Eric Cunningham	Joshua Joseph	Steve Ziegler
Timothy DeVall	Dan King	
Anthony DiPietro	James Knight	

Contact office to update list: secretary@stmaryskutztown.com

We are a welcoming community called to deepen and share our faith

EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Sun 10.06 27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**
Elementary Religious Education, 9:40a
Young Adult Group, 6p
- Mon 10.07 Kitchen Help: Make BBQ, 10a**
- Tue 10.08 Faith Sharing, 10a**
Bake Cookies, 12n
Baptism Workshop, 7p
- Wed 10.09 Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 7-8p**
- Thu 10.10 Music Ministry, 7p**
O.C.I.A., 7p
- Sat 10.12 Rauenzahn-Bower wedding, 1p**
Pray the Rosary, 4p
2nd Collection – Capital Improvements

EVENTS NEXT WEEK

- Sun 10.13 28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**
2nd Collection-Capital Improvements
Mass recognizing Ladies Auxiliary, 8:30a
Elementary Religious Education, 9:40a
Men of St. Mary's, 9:45a
Junior High ministry, 6p
Parent meeting, level 8, 6:15p
- Mon 10.14 Kitchen help: Vegetable Beef Soup, 10a**
- Tue 10.15 Faith Sharing, 10a**
Baptism Workshop, 7p
- Wed 10.16 Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 7-8p**
Peace-Foulke wedding, 4p
- Thu 10.17 Music ministry, 7p**
O.C.I.A., 7p
- Sat 10.19 Pray the Rosary, 4p**
2nd Collection – World Missions
Holiday Bazaar book/ White elephant drop offs,
after Masses this weekend

BULLETIN DEADLINE: Submit items by Monday prior to Sunday, *full-page items two full weeks in advance.*

PARISH MEMBERSHIP: Welcome! Please register for parish membership. Call 610-683-7443 for an appointment and find out about all the parish has to offer! *Inform us if moving.*

BAPTISM WORKSHOP 7p, Oct. 01 and 08. Contact Ann Pergosky to register/for info: 610-683-6454

SIGN UP FOR ALTAR SERVER TRAINING. 4th -12th grade



boys and girls may participate in Altar Server ministry, assisting Fr. Maria. Parents, talk with your children about becoming involved. Contact Fr. John Maria with any questions.

ATTN-YOUNG ADULT GROUP AT ST. MARY'S! You've heard the names of Perpetua and Felicity during Mass, but who are they? Starting 6p Sunday Oct. 6 in the Parish Office/Rectorry, come find out more about the saints – most especially those young adults who followed Christ! For more info, contact Sarah:
smwilson0913@gmail.com

young
ADULT

We are a welcoming community called to deepen and share our faith

QUESTIONS ABOUT DIVORCE AND MARRIAGE? In the Gospel for this Sunday, the Lord gives strong teaching on the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony. Sadly, so many of us have known the tragedy and pain of divorce. The Church founded by Christ has upheld His sacred teaching, while recognizing that there are sometimes circumstances that may have prevented a valid and sacramental bond from taking place from the outset. If you have any questions about divorce and/or a second civil marriage, please don't hesitate to contact Fr. John to talk and learn how the Church can be of assistance. Be not afraid!

MASS INTENTIONS: As Catholics we believe souls united in Christ remain connected-even after death, seek the prayers of the saints, and pray for the souls of loved ones who have died in Christ. It's a most powerful prayer and act of love to request Mass be offered for the souls of loved ones.

The 2025 Mass book is open for Saturday/Sunday and weekday Mass requests. Contact the parish office to schedule a mass intention. Because of the increased demand for scheduled Masses:

- † The book is open for the whole year until dates are full.
- † Please request no more than 1 weekend Mass per month.
- † There are no limitations on daily Masses.
- † Personal Mass intentions not available for: Holy Thursday, Easter, Christmas, Mothers' nor Father's Day

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION- FR. JOHN MARIA

Our readings for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time speak to God's plan for the unique creatures made in His own image, man and woman. In Genesis 2, we have a glimpse into the profound mystery at the heart of God's creation: the complementarity of male and female in marriage, whereby the two become one.

This order was envisioned from the beginning, for the health, blessing and flourishing of His human family. And yet, objections and resistance arise in every generation – even when Jesus walked the earth. In the Gospel, the Incarnate Lord responds to the trap questions of the Pharisees. Jesus does not nuance or idealize the plan for marriage, but fortifies the ancient teaching, and emphasizes the indissolubility of Christian marriage between male and female.

Notice that immediately after expressing His teaching, He speaks of the beauty of children. "Let the children come to me!"

We live in a time where dominant belief of the secular mainstream is opposed to this teaching of Christ, seeking to redefine marriage and even the biological reality of male and female! Meanwhile, those who promote abortion are becoming bolder still.

As followers of Christ, we must be clear in Who it is we follow – Christ or the secular culture.

Let us go to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - One who gave us this teaching, the One who fortified it and went to the cross for love of us, and the One who has guided His Church - to renew us in confidence in His beautiful plan, to enlighten us and strengthen us as we strive to live and share His truth in love!



Sept/Oct we're busy preparing the delicious food you can purchase at the annual Holiday Bazaar, Nov. 2. Walk-in helpers welcome! Call Mary Alkons for info: 610- 683-5443. Here is the food prep schedule:

Mon	Oct 07	10a	Make BBQ
Mon	Oct 14	10a	Vegetable Beef Soup
Mon	Oct 21	10a	Turkey Noodle Soup
Mon	Oct 28	10a	Turkey Rice Soup
Thu	Oct 31	10a	Haluski (<i>Bring electric fry pan if possible, for Haluski</i>)
Fri	Nov 01	10-3p	Set-up
Sat	Nov 02	7:30a-3:30p	Bazaar kitchen help: sign-up for help thru-out the day

Holiday Bazaar Cookies: Rolled, decorated cookies are very popular at the Holiday Bazaar. Here's an *easy* recipe. **Donate cookie dough to REC in time for baking 12n-3p Tuesdays Sept 03—Oct 08.** Call Carm 610-683-5931 or Valetta: 610-926-3910.

ABC Cookies



- | | | |
|-----------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 5 c flour | 3 eggs | 1 tsp cream of tartar |
| 2 c sugar | 1 tsp baking soda | ½ tsp vanilla |
| | ¾ lb. melted butter | |

Mix all ingredients together and divide into 3 patties. Wrap in waxed paper and chill overnight. Roll out and cut into shapes. Decorate & bake, 350° for 8-10 minutes.



CALLING ST. MARY'S BAKERS: Consider sharing your baking talent at the Holiday Bazaar. Bring your favorite baked good—cake, brownies, pie, breads—to the REC Baked Goods Room **Friday, 9a-5p, Nov. 01.** Info-Valetta: 610-568-4985

EUCCHARIST ROSARY CONGRESS FOR BERKS COUNTY! The Catholic parishes of Berks County will unite for a special time of adoration of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, united in prayer to God with Our Lady of the Rosary!

From Saturday Oct 5 to Friday, October 11, Holy Guardian Angels will provide their side chapel for all of our parishes, as we join in Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament throughout the week!

Adorers are welcome each day of the week! However, our parish (with Sacred heart & Holy Rosary) has been entrusted with the filling time-slots on Sunday, October 6 (all day). That is, from 11:59pm Saturday night until 11:59 pm Sunday night. The location is safe and secure. We are seeking multiple people for each slot. See the table in the gathering area to sign up. Signing up can also be done here: <https://adorationpro.org/hgareading> The Rosary will be recited every hour on the hour. Learn more: www.rosarycongressusa.org

Join together in prayer with the Blessed Mother and all the faithful in Berks before our Eucharistic Lord. He will bless all those willing to spend this intimate time with Him!



HOLIDAY BAZAAR

Sponsored by St. Mary's Ladies Auxiliary
Saturday, Nov 2 ~ 8:30 am-2:30 pm

VOLUNTEERS & DONATIONS URGENTLY NEEDED:

Set up: Stacey Breiner, 484-769-0318

- **Sunday, Oct 27 starting at 12 pm**
- Oct 28-Nov 1, various hours

Help during the Bazaar: Stacey Breiner, 484-769-0318

Tear down/clean up when Bazaar ends: Tom Cengeri, 610-207-5831, or Stacey Breiner, 484-769-0318

Serve food during the Bazaar: Mary Alkons, 610-683-5443

DROP OFF packing material in marked boxes in church Gathering Area & Religious Ed. Bldg.

DROP OFF gently used White Elephant Items, Collectibles & Books (*please, NO encyclopedias, dictionaries or VHS tapes*):

- Sat-Sun, Oct 19-20, 26-27, after Masses
- Mon, Oct 21, 9a-4p; Tues-Wed, Oct. 22-23, 9a-8p; Thur-Fri, Oct. 24-25, 9a-4p

HELP ORGANIZE & SELL

White Elephant: Cindy Krutsick, 610-987-0795

Books: Marcia & Steve Zettle, 610-944-1838

Auxiliary Table of Handmade Items: Frances Larash, 610-683-3675

Baked Goods (home-baked items ONLY): Valetta Eshbach, 610-568-4985 (label items; put your name on returnable containers)

Cookies: Carm Sosik, 610-683-5931

CASH & GIFT BASKET RAFFLES

Tickets sold after Masses Oct 12, 13, 19, 20, 26 & 27 and at the Bazaar.

****Please return tickets mailed to you.****



Please help us continue our parish's Holiday Bazaar traditions!

BERKS COUNTY LIFE CHAIN: 2-3:30p, Oct. 6 Penn Ave, W. Reading. Take a public stand in prayer. Prayer walk 5:45p Sat. Sept 30, St James Church. The Life Chain is a peaceful, prayerful activity, presenting the truth about abortion and the healing power of Jesus Christ. Learn more: Pam Snyder 610-790-9197

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS: Webinar 6:30p, Oct. 09 on the coming Election. Hosted by the PA and NJ Catholic Conferences, “Blessed Are the Peacemakers”. Participants will learn how Catholics can prepare for the upcoming election and restore civility to politics and public discourse. Panelists will be James J. King, NJ Catholic Conference; Emily Schumacher-Novak, U.S.C.C.B.; and Eric Failing, PA Catholic Conference. Register: bit.ly/46ZEW3F

ANNUAL MEN’S CONFERENCE: 8a-3p, Oct. 19, St. Joseph the Worker, Orefield. A day for Catholic men to renew and strengthen your faith. Embrace the mission of the Church and deepen your relationship with God through a powerful day of community, Sacraments, and talks from nationally renowned speakers. Cost \$35. Contact: Mark McDevitt, markmcd@outlook.com www.menaliveinchrist.org/events/

THE BLESSINGS OF AGING- 9a-4p, Oct. 12, Mariawald Renewal Ctr. Explore the blessings, burdens and beauty of Aging through the lens and insight of Sr Joan Chittister, OSB’s writings with Sr. Nancy Iampietro, a Missionary Sister of the Precious Blood. There will be time for silence and private prayer as we open to God’s dream for this stage of our lives. Register (by 10/09); Cost \$40 *incl lunch*. 610-777-0135 or email mariawaldcenter@gmail.com

WHITE MASS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS: 11a, Oct. 13, St. Joseph the Worker, Orefield, Bishop Schlert celebrant. Brunch reception at The Glasbern Inn, Fogelsville to follow, featuring guest speaker Dcn. Wm. Williams.

MARIAN CONCERT- 2p, Oct. 13, Cathedral in Allentown There is no admission fee, but we will have a free will offering.

MSC OKTOBERFEST: 12-5p, Oct. 13, at Reading Liederkrantz. *Hosted by and for the Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.* Enjoy an authentic German Oktoberfest! **With *Live Music/ Dancing!** *\$20 entrance fee online or at the door (\$10 for 10-17 – under 10 free); *An outdoor celebration at pavilion, open-air, first-come seating, *scattered heaters, if needed*; *Authentic German Food and Beer *ordered by guests-cash-only food/ beverage stands (menu options online)*. *For tickets or to support our Sisters: www.mscreading.org cwhitmoyer@mscreading.org

KNOW THE FACTS - VOTER REGISTRATION IN PA:

Registered to vote? No? Check your county voter registration office. The last day to register for November 2024 elections is Oct. 21.

Details about voting in PA: www.votespa.com

OCTOBER IS RESPECT LIFE MONTH: Join Catholics nationwide in celebrating. Visit respectlife.org/celebrate

REFLECTION... by Rev. Leonard N. Peterson

If I write or say the word “convention” at this time you can’t be blamed for conjuring up images of noisy political gatherings two of which we just lived through in this presidential election year. But there is another, less often used version of the word, in the sense of “an established custom. It is something that is generally accepted, something that members of society can agree on. Conventions usually develop because they are useful in some way, but after a time they often become restrictive and oppressive.

Such is the case with religious history. There has been a persistent thread of what we could call “puritanism” throughout. It has had names like “Gnosticism and Dualism.” These lead to the idea that the whole purpose in life is to escape from matter, especially sexuality, which ties us down to the material. It is essential for us to know that authentic biblical Christianity, Catholicism for sure, is NOT puritanical.

Bluntly put, there is nothing evil about our bodies, or sex, or sexual longing, or the sexual act. All matter is basically good, because it is created by an all-good God. When Jesus is asked about marriage and divorce, He proposes the context and the ideal for sexual expression in a lifelong union of man and woman. He stresses that this is the divine plan.

That alone is a direct contradiction of what our present-day culture holds as a “convention.” Sex and sexual expression are to be indulged in whenever the impulse strikes, with no acknowledgment of a divine plan. It can be engaged in with a same-sex partner as well as one of the opposite sex. It does not require any approval by an outside source, namely the Church and State. Nor is it to be understood as a holy calling endorsed by the Holy Spirit and one of the seven holy sacraments.

Obviously, with such a widespread “convention” accepted by the majority, one will be held in contempt for holding the opposite. As a result, our Christian belief is made a fit subject for mockery.

The ideal of lifelong marital union clashes with the sad reality of divorce. Our Church understands this and works to help those who may be “trapped,” as it were, in a certain marital relationship. While bound to Christ’s teaching, she may be able to find reasons for such unions not having been sacramental from the start, and she can annul them. But such annulments are not “Catholic divorce.”

Meanwhile, it is incumbent on the older married generation to make sure that the younger generation understands the seriousness of preparing to take marriage vows, all the while setting an example of how to keep them over time. That is a very worthwhile “convention.”

Admittedly people living the marital vocation must face challenges. That’s part of our human condition. But we believers know that we do not face such challenges alone. Christ walks with all of us on our life’s journey. He promised as much... In this context, that is a Christian “convention.”

Here are two less serious but helpful quotes about marriage to end this reflection:

“Marriage is the union of a person who never remembers anniversaries with one who never forgets them.”—Ogden Nash, poet

“Before you marry a person you should first make them use a computer with slow internet to see who they really are.” – Will Ferrel, comedian.

God love you and give you His peace.

“I Came So That They Might Have Life”

Respect Life Reflection

During the Easter Vigil liturgy, the single flame of the Easter candle shines through the darkness. That small flame spreads as each person's candle is lit and the light of Christ is shared with others. Before we know it, the entire Church is ablaze with the warm glow of candlelight and the darkness has been vanquished.

We are each called by God to be that light of Christ that breaks through the darkness. We are called to be his disciples, continually transformed by our encounter with him and sharing in his mission. Jesus came that we might have life.

Part of the impetus for the Eucharistic Revival was a concern that some Catholics do not believe, or at least do not understand, that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. Even though our human senses perceive bread and wine, the Eucharist is Jesus—body, blood, soul, and divinity. Similarly, many people do not realize or acknowledge the sanctity of human life when it is hidden in the womb. Both instances call for us to help others recognize these sacred gifts that may not be perceivable through our human senses. We need to help others understand that just because something may not be apparent to our eyes does not mean that it is not there or that it is not important.

We live in a society that rejects those who are weak, fragile, or vulnerable. Yet, it is precisely within these conditions that a person is most in need of our care and protection. Pope Francis reminds us that “every child who, rather than being born, is condemned unjustly to being aborted, bears the face of Jesus Christ, bears the face of the Lord, who even before he was born, and then just after birth, experienced the world's rejection.”

The U.S. bishops have affirmed that, while it is important to address all the ways in which human life is threatened, “abortion remains our pre-eminent priority as it directly attacks our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, destroying more than a million lives each year in our country alone.”

As Pope St. John Paul II wrote, “we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the ‘culture of death’ and the ‘culture of life’. ...we are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life.”



“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” *John 1:5*

In the face of challenges such as abortion and physician-assisted suicide, we may feel that we are not equal to the task of overcoming the darkness. Yet, we are not alone. Jesus tells us, “I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

The God who became man to save us still dwells among us. For Christ is “the light [that] shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). He is the one who overcame death and continually raises us to new life. He remains close to us always, seeking us out in each moment of our lives.

Jesus gave his very flesh to give us the gift of eternal life and invites us to the most profound experience of this gift in our celebration of the Eucharist. When we meet Jesus in the Eucharist, this encounter has the power to change us. The Eucharist has the power to transform the depths of our hearts and the heart of our culture. United to the power of his Eucharistic Presence, may we work to ensure that each person has life—and has it in abundance.

¹Pope Francis, “Address of Holy Father Francis to Participants in the Meeting Organized by the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations,” September 20, 2013 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013).

²*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*, Introductory Letter, p. 8. (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2024).

³Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), no. 28.

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