

### ***St. Patrick and St. Joseph***

This week are the feast days commemorating two saints who are close to many peoples' hearts, St. Patrick and St. Joseph.

Monday, March 17, St. Patrick's Day, is celebrated liturgically as a commemoration because it occurs during Lent. The Collect of the Mass of the day acknowledges how St. Patrick preached and proclaimed God's glory to the peoples of Ireland, and it goes on to pray that "*those who glory in the name of Christian may never cease to proclaim your wondrous deeds to all.*" Allow me to wish a happy St. Patrick's Day to those who celebrate their Irish heritage this day. I hope the day is rich in joy and festivity for you!

On Wednesday, March 19, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The day is an important one and is given the rank of Solemnity in the liturgical calendar, which means that the day takes precedence over the Lenten day! In fact, the *Glory to God in the highest* returns to Mass on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, for this one day, and the Creed is said, too. All these liturgical elements mark for us the prominence of this day that celebrates the saint who is the Patron of the Universal Church and the patron of workers, of carpenters, and of fathers.

We celebrate St. Joseph as, to use the words of the Mass for that day, that "*just man*" given by God "*as spouse to the Virgin Mother of God and set as a wise and faithful servant*" in charge of the Holy Family, "*to watch like a father*" over God's Only Begotten Son. The model of humility and quiet service given to us by St. Joseph is something to ponder deeply.

However, what's the best part about celebrating St. Joseph's Day? THE PASTRIES, OF COURSE, the *sfinzi* and *zeppoli*!!! I'll admit it's hard for me not to go overboard with those pastries in the days leading up to the feast (I have *already* had my share, and then some!). St. Joseph's Day is a great day for Italians to celebrate and be proud of their Italian heritage, since we know, of course, that St. Joseph was Italian(!).

May your St. Joseph's Day be a holy and festive one!

### ***Music on Solemnities at 12:15 p.m. weekday Mass***

We are instituting a new practice here at OLPH concerning Solemnities that are celebrated on weekdays. Since Solemnities have a high liturgical rank, they really should be celebrated with the degree of festivity and solemnity that the day demands; they should be distinguished from ordinary weekdays and other lesser memorials. Therefore, starting with the Solemnity of St. Joseph this Wednesday, we will have music and a cantor at the 12:15 p.m. weekday Mass on Solemnities. (The 6:30 a.m. weekday Mass will continue to remain without music.)

These are the Solemnities which will have music at the 12:15 p.m. weekday Mass: February 2, the Presentation of the Lord; March 19, St. Joseph; March 25, the Annunciation; June 24, The Nativity of St. John the Baptist; and June 29, Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles. In addition, music will continue to be provided at a weekday Mass when these Solemnities, which are usually Holy Days of Obligation, fall on a Saturday or a Monday and the obligation is removed for that particular year: January 1, Mary, the Holy Mother of God; August 15, the Assumption of the BVM; and November 1, All Saints.

This will allow us to really celebrate the rhythms of the various feasts throughout the liturgical year. I thank Chris Ferraro, our Director of Music, for overseeing this addition to our liturgical life.

### ***Ossuary***

We have just purchased a liturgical vessel which we are calling an ossuary. Technically, an ossuary is any depository for the bones of the dead. We are using the term to also apply to a liturgical vessel which will hold the cremated remains of the deceased at a funeral Mass.

As you know, the Church permits the cremated remains of the deceased to be brought into church for the funeral Mass if cremation takes place before the Mass. However, sometimes the container for the cremated remains is not worthy and dignified enough for the liturgy; many times it is a container that, although not offensive in any way, just does not

have the nobility that communicates the importance of the mortal remains of the deceased as the mortal remains of a Christian body that was washed in Baptism, anointed in Confirmation and nourished by the Eucharist. So, OLPH now has a worthy and dignified liturgical vessel into which the container with the cremated remains can be placed, and this new liturgical vessel is what will remain on display during the funeral Mass. We feel this adds an added dimension of reverence and dignity to funeral Masses at which the cremated remains are present.

There is the possibility of memorializing this ossuary at a cost of \$4,000. If you are interested in doing this, please contact me.

### ***Parish Leadership Meeting***

This Saturday, March 22, an important event will take place in our parish life. We will be holding a special **Parish Leadership Meeting**.

The idea for the meeting grew out of discussions among the Pastoral Staff and the Pastoral Council which centered around the need for our parish to grow in the area of how all the various ministries, organizations and societies work together for the benefit of the entire parish. This area of growth identified by the Pastoral Staff and Pastoral Council was confirmed in the Parish Visitation Report sent to me as a follow-up to the Parish Visitation conducted by our Episcopal Vicar, Msgr. James McNamara, last December. Msgr. McNamara wrote in his report: "One of the challenges...is that there are many different bailiwicks in the parish. I recommend that you continue your good efforts to bring people together so that they see the larger picture and that they work together for the good of the parish."

Thus, we are holding this all-afternoon **Parish Leadership Meeting** to which all the heads of the many parish ministries, societies and organizations have been invited. It will be an opportunity for those present to discuss how we can all buy into a more integrated vision of parish life, move beyond different "turfs" and "bailiwicks," and begin to better work together for the parish as a whole. We will also begin to discuss a course for the future for OLPH.

Please take some time this week to pray for the success of this meeting — pray that the Holy Spirit will send us His Gifts of Wisdom and Understanding. I am deeply grateful to all the heads of the groups who will be attending, and I thank them for their commitment in giving their time to this important moment in the life of the parish.

### ***"We've always done it this way!"***

I think that one of the outgrowths of the aforementioned Parish Leadership Meeting is that many of our ministries, societies and organizations may have to find some new ways of doing things. Indeed, change is always difficult, but sometimes we need to realize that the more we cling on to a "*We've always done it this way*" mentality, the more we might actually be stifling growth, stifling life, and stifling the Holy Spirit. There has been a tremendous burst of new life and new energy over the past year and a half at OLPH, due to the openness and zeal and generosity of so many of you. Let's keep that going; let's be open to new horizons and new adventures in ministry. Let's acknowledge the truth of our faith that in order to experience new life, we have to die to some old ways and old things — that's what the Paschal Mystery, Jesus' death and resurrection, teaches us.

### ***Meeting of Pastoral Staff and Pastoral Council***

Another important moment in this forward movement and new life at OLPH took place at the end of February, when we held a joint meeting of the Pastoral Staff and the Pastoral Council. My good friend Msgr. Bill Hanson brought his expertise to us in facilitating a discussion about the life of the parish and the engagement level of the parishioners. The results of that meeting, which will continue to be discussed by the Pastoral Staff and the Pastoral Council at future meetings, are printed elsewhere in the bulletin. Please take a few minutes to read it over and see what a vibrant and exciting parish OLPH is!

### ***Parish Mission with Msgr. Charles Fink***

I very strongly urge you to plan now to make the time to attend the three nights of our Parish Mission Monday through Wednesday

next week, March 24, 25, and 26. The presenter will be Msgr. Charles Fink, Spiritual Director at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers. Msgr. Fink was also the Spiritual Director at our diocesan seminary in Huntington when I was on faculty there and we shared eight wonderful years as colleagues. I am thrilled to be welcoming Msgr. Fink to OLPH because he is a holy, insightful and very moving speaker whose love for the Lord, deep spirituality and great care and concern for God's people is clearly evident. You will be doing yourself a great favor by making the time to come. I promise you your Lenten journey will be enriched and your spirituality deepened. Please plan on being there.

***How are you doing with Lent?***

I hope your Lenten journey is already beginning to bear good fruit. Let's not forget to pray for one another; we are on this journey together, with Jesus and with one another. As we begin this second week, let us ask God, in the words of the Collect for the Second Sunday of Lent, "*to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory.*"

***In conclusion...***

Together, let's aim high in Christ. Together, let's bring out the best in each other. Together, let's be the best we can be in Christ.

And let's always remember: LOVE IS A GIFT.

Sincerely,