

Parish Mission with Msgr. Charles Fink

As you know from having participated at Mass, this weekend we are welcoming Msgr. Charles Fink to OLPH. Msgr. Fink, Spiritual Director at St. Joseph Seminary in Yonkers, where men from the Diocese of Rockville Centre prepare for the priesthood, will be giving us our Parish Lenten Mission this week, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights; full details are advertised elsewhere in this bulletin.

I had the pleasure of working with Msgr. Fink when both of us were on faculty together at our now-defunct Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington. Msgr. Fink, with his dry sense of humor and insightful spirituality will have some meaningful insights to offer us to assist in our journey through Lent. I am absolutely thrilled that we have been able to book him to come here and I am looking forward to hearing his presentations. I hope you will make every effort to attend; I can assure you that it will be worth your time and effort.

Why it's important to be registered

One aspect of parish life which people often have many questions about is that of being registered in a parish. Parish registration is important, and actually being registered is not something that is automatic. Often adults will say, "But I was baptized and received First Communion at OLPH, so I'm registered, right?" Well, not necessarily.

OLPH Roman Catholic Church has doors open to all; we do not look to turn anybody away, and we will seek to assist all who come to us as much as possible. At the same time, we obviously do not have the resources to serve the entire diocese, which is made up of all of Nassau and Suffolk Counties. This is why we have parish boundaries: the parish in which a Catholic lives is territorially and automatically one's parish. This is the parish that has jurisdiction over the Catholic and to which the Catholic is expected to be an active part.

The most important aspect of expressing one's belonging to a parish is regular participation in the community's gathering at Sunday Eucharist. More than anything else, our unity around the Eucharistic table each and every Sunday is the source and summit of our

life together. It is what identifies us as Catholics and it is the center of our spiritual life. As Catholics, although we might occasionally attend Mass in other parishes for valid reasons, we should not regularly flit from parish to parish Sunday after Sunday, since participation in the celebration of the Eucharist is not just about fulfilling an obligation and not just about receiving Communion, but is about becoming more deeply immersed in the Body of Christ which is made manifest around the altar community of one's home parish — one's "family table," so to speak.

This Sunday Eucharistic communion is the foundation for the reason why Baptisms are to occur in the home parish of the parents (because this is where the family will celebrate the Eucharist weekly, where the children will receive religious formation, where the children will celebrate their sacraments, *etc.*), why Marriage occurs in the home parish of either the bride or groom (yes, according to the Church it does not have to be the bride's parish necessarily; it can be either the bride's or the groom's, as long as it is one of theirs), and why the home parish should be called for sick calls, anointings, house blessings, *etc.* It is also why Funeral Masses are to be celebrated in the home parish of the deceased — because of the Eucharistic connection.

At OLPH, we look at registration in two ways:

If you live territorially in the parish boundaries of OLPH, you are automatically a parishioner. We have an obligation to minister to those who are within our boundaries, regardless of whether or not they are officially registered. Therefore, Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, the Funeral Mass, *etc.*, should and will automatically take place at OLPH for those who are our parishioners. **However, there are still important reasons why you should be officially registered, even if you live within the parish boundaries.** First, we want and need to know you are out there, for purposes of pastoral planning, so we have an idea of what needs we need to fulfill, and for a host of other reasons! Just as important, **for certain things in the parish you must be officially registered ("on the records"):** for example, for children to

attend our parish religious education program, for sponsor certificates for Baptism and Confirmation, and for other letters of recommendation. If you grew up in a family registered in the parish but now live on your own as a married or single adult, you should re-register as your new household. This also becomes important at times when a Funeral Mass is requested, since the Funeral Mass should be held in the home parish of the deceased.

In addition to the parish having obligations to the parishioners, parishioners have the obligation to support their parish by participating in Sunday Mass, as already mentioned, and by being an active and vibrant part of the life of the parish in many other activities and spiritual gatherings. In addition, parishioners have the obligation to support their parish financially and materially.

How do you know if you are registered? The simplest way to tell is to see if you receive mailings from us. If you do receive mailings from the parish, you are definitely on the records. If not, you should check it out to make sure; you may not be. How can you become officially registered if you live within the parish boundaries? It's very simple: all you need do is stop by the rectory office and ask to be registered in the parish. An appointment with one of the priests will be set up with you, and he will be glad to meet you and fill out the form with you. We do this not because you have to pass a test or anything like that, but simply so that we can provide a friendly and pastoral and personal contact with you in the interest of getting to know our parishioners as well as possible.

If you live territorially outside the parish boundaries, you are not considered a parishioner unless you are officially registered.

It is possible to be a member of OLPH if you are outside the parish boundaries, but this takes a certain amount of thought and discernment. As I'm sure you can well understand, the last thing we need is to have a whole bunch of people who belong to the parish in name only but who do not support the parish or participate in the spiritual and social life of the parish. Therefore, anyone outside the boundaries of the parish who wishes to become a member of OLPH is

personally interviewed by me or by one of the other priests. In this interview we discuss their reasons for not wanting to be a part of their territorial parish and the necessity of being an active and supportive member of OLPH should they register here. Especially for people living outside the boundaries of the parish, being officially registered at OLPH becomes crucial when Baptisms, Marriages, Funeral Masses, *etc.* are requested. As a rule, these liturgies are to take place in the home parish since that is the person's Sunday Eucharistic community.

Let me again reiterate: it is imperative that if you live outside the territorial boundaries of OLPH but consider yourself to be a parishioner of OLPH because you worship here and wish to avail yourself of our services, **you must be sure you are registered.** A phone call to the rectory can determine if you are registered, and, if not, you are welcome to set up an appointment with me so we can discuss the issues.

I thank everyone for their understanding with this pastoral issue which, at times, can be a sensitive one. It is important, though, to help us ensure that we are ministering to everyone as effectively as possible. In addition, as you know, we are undertaking the process of a new census, whereby we will ask **everyone** to be registered using our new census forms which will be created (you haven't missed anything—we're not at that stage yet!). For many, it will mean re-registering according to the new census project, even if you have been a parishioner all your life. For others, it will be an opportunity to finally become registered.

How are you doing with Lent?

Here we are at the Third Sunday of Lent, where St. John's account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman is proclaimed to us in our Gospel. In this year, Cycle A, the Gospel readings for the Third, Fourth and Fifth Sundays of Lent — the accounts of the Samaritan woman (Third Sunday), of the man born blind (Fourth Sunday), and of the Lord's raising of Lazarus (Fifth Sunday) — have a very, very long tradition of being used on these Sundays, because they have a special significance to those preparing for Baptism at Easter. These Gospels reveal Jesus as Living Water, as one who gives

sight, and as one who gives life, and therefore all three call those preparing for Baptism, and all of us who are preparing to renew our Baptism at Easter, to an ongoing process of deeper conversion and deeper belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior. After all, isn't that the goal of Lent for all of us — that we believe more deeply in, and be more deeply united to, our crucified-risen Savior, Christ Jesus?

I hope you have noticed that we have expanded our bulletin's presentation of the upcoming Sunday readings, for your own spiritual reflection and for your preparation for Mass. I hope you are taking advantage of this background material and the questions for reflection.

After hearing this Sunday's Gospel, we should all ask ourselves what it means for us to come to Jesus as the Living Water that satisfies all our thirsts.

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,