

**FROM THE DESK OF FR. DAVID**

**We continue to present for your reading and meditation the recent Encyclical on Christian Hope, SPE SALVI by Pope Benedict: PART IV**

**ETERNAL LIFE – WHAT IS IT?**

10. We have spoken thus far of faith and hope in the New Testament and in early Christianity; yet it has always been clear that we are referring not only to the past: the entire reflection concerns living and dying in general, and therefore it also concerns us here and now. So now we must ask explicitly: is the Christian faith also for us today a life-changing and life-sustaining hope?

Is it “performative” for us—is it a message which shapes our life in a new way, or is it just “information” which, in the meantime, we have set aside and which now seems to us to have been superseded by more recent information? In the search for an answer, I would like to begin with the classical form of the dialogue with which the rite of Baptism expressed the reception of an infant into the community of believers and the infant's rebirth in Christ. First of all the priest asked what name the parents had chosen for the child, and then he continued with the question: “What do you ask of the Church?” Answer: “Faith”. “And what does faith give you?” “Eternal life”. According to this dialogue, the parents were seeking access to the faith for their child, communion with believers, because they saw in faith the key to “eternal life”. Today as in the past, this is what being baptized, becoming Christians, is all about: it is not just an act of socialization within the community, not simply a welcome into the Church. The parents expect more for the one to be baptized: they expect that faith, which includes the corporeal nature of the Church and her sacraments, will give life to their child—eternal life. Faith is the substance of hope. But then the question arises: do we really want this—to live eternally? Perhaps many people reject the faith today simply because they do not find the prospect of eternal life attractive. What they desire is not eternal life at all, but this present life, for which faith in eternal life seems something of an impediment. To continue living for ever—endlessly—appears more like a curse than a gift. Death, admittedly, one would wish to postpone for as long as possible. But to live always, without end—this, all things considered, can only be monotonous and ultimately unbearable. This is precisely the point made, for example, by Saint Ambrose, one of the Church Fathers, in the funeral discourse for his deceased brother Satyrus: “Death was not part of nature; it became part of nature. God did not decree death from the beginning; he prescribed it as a remedy. Human life, because of sin ... began to experience the burden of wretchedness in unremitting labour and unbearable sorrow. There had to be a limit to its evils; death had to restore what life had forfeited. Without the assistance of grace, immortality is more of a burden than a blessing”[6]. A little earlier, Ambrose had said: “Death is, then, no cause for mourning, for it is the cause of mankind's salvation”[7].

11. Whatever precisely Saint Ambrose may have meant by these words, it is true that to eliminate death or to postpone it more or less indefinitely would place the earth and humanity in an impossible situation, and even for the individual would bring no benefit. Obviously there is a contradiction in our attitude, which points to an inner contradiction in our very existence. On the one hand, we do not want to die; above all, those who love

us do not want us to die. Yet on the other hand, neither do we want to continue living indefinitely, nor was the earth created with that in view. So what do we really want? Our paradoxical attitude gives rise to a deeper question: what in fact is “life”? And what does “eternity” really mean? There are moments when it suddenly seems clear to us: yes, this is what true “life” is—this is what it should be like. Besides, what we call “life” in our everyday language is not real “life” at all. Saint Augustine, in the extended letter on prayer which he addressed to Proba, a wealthy Roman widow and mother of three consuls, once wrote this: ultimately we want only one thing—the blessed life, the life which is simply life, simply “happiness”. In the final analysis, there is nothing else that we ask for in prayer. Our journey has no other goal—it is about this alone. But then Augustine also says: looking more closely, we have no idea what we ultimately desire, what we would really like. We do not know this reality at all; even in those moments when we think we can reach out and touch it, it eludes us. “We do not know what we should pray for as we ought,” he says, quoting Saint Paul (Rom 8:26). All we know is that it is not this. Yet in not knowing, we know that this reality must exist. “There is therefore in us a certain learned ignorance (docta ignorantia), so to speak”, he writes. We do not know what we would really like; we do not know this “true life”; and yet we know that there must be something we do not know towards which we feel driven[8].

12. I think that in this very precise and permanently valid way, Augustine is describing man's essential situation, the situation that gives rise to all his contradictions and hopes. In some way we want life itself, true life, untouched even by death; yet at the same time we do not know the thing towards which we feel driven. We cannot stop reaching out for it, and yet we know that all we can experience or accomplish is not what we yearn for. This unknown “thing” is the true “hope” which drives us, and at the same time the fact that it is unknown is the cause of all forms of despair and also of all efforts, whether positive or destructive, directed towards worldly authenticity and human authenticity. The term “eternal life” is intended to give a name to this known “unknown”. Inevitably it is an inadequate term that creates confusion. “Eternal”, in fact, suggests to us the idea of something interminable, and this frightens us; “life” makes us think of the life that we know and love and do not want to lose, even though very often it brings more toil than satisfaction, so that while on the one hand we desire it, on the other hand we do not want it. To imagine ourselves outside the temporality that imprisons us and in some way to sense that eternity is not an unending succession of days in the calendar, but something more like the supreme moment of satisfaction, in which totality embraces us and we embrace totality—this we can only attempt. It would be like plunging into the ocean of infinite love, a moment in which time—the before and after—no longer exists. We can only attempt to grasp the idea that such a moment is life in the full sense, a plunging ever anew into the vastness of being, in which we are simply overwhelmed with joy. This is how Jesus expresses it in Saint John's Gospel: “I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (16:22). We must think along these lines if we want to understand the object of Christian hope, to understand what it is that our faith, our being with Christ, leads us to expect[9].

**LOCAL PASTORAL PLANNING MTG: Tuesday, 26 February at 7:00pm at OL Mount Carmel**

## THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

### Homebound? ...and Desire a Visit?...Communion?

The Felician Sisters, Edna and Evangeline are an outreach to members of all three parishes who are homebound. They will gladly visit parishioners upon request, bring news of the parishes, companionship and Holy Communion. For information or to schedule visits please call Sr. Edna at 842.2621.

**THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION** will be celebrated by the parishes of Montgomery County at Auriesville on Wednesday, 30 April 2008 at 7:00pm.

### *This week in the Lenten Spring*

#### Daily Mass

8:00am; Saint Stanislaus Church

#### A Season of Enlightenment: Lent-Easter Speakers

Tuesday, 26 February at 6:30pm

St. Stanislaus Center for Learning and the Arts

**Barbara DiTommaso:**

*The Church's Evolving Teaching on Peace and War*

#### Stations of the Cross and Benediction

Friday, 8 February at 6:30pm; Saint Casimir Church

**MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND:** Married couples! Home improvement is not about hammers and nails. It's about relationship. Enrich your marriage and enrich your home on a Marriage Encounter Weekend. Sign up soon so you can renew your love for one another. Call Ed & Rhonda Staats at 518-279-3243 for information on the March 28-30 or June 20-22 weekends.

**CAMP SCULLY:** Applications are now available for the summer camp program, Camp Scully. Interested families can obtain an application by calling 518-453-6613, email [campscully@ccalbany.org](mailto:campscully@ccalbany.org) or they can write: Camp Scully, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany, 40 N. Main Ave., Albany, NY 12203. Please see the flyer on the bulletin board for more information.



### **Operation Rice Bowl**

#### **Third Sunday of Lent – Option for the Poor**

Jesus guides the Samaritan woman to a greater appreciation of the Truth—Himself. At Mass today, the homilist gave you greater insight into Scripture's message. Education is key to our lives, regardless of our age. Pailash, a young Indian boy stricken with polio, didn't have access to education. He survived by selling newspapers and slept in fear of being robbed. Finally he found safety and opportunity in a Kolkata school for orphans supported by Catholic Relief Services. Today, he eats regular meals, enjoys studying math, and is preparing to learn a useful trade. A fundamental option for the poor is a central tenet of the Church's teachings and mission. CRS helps to expand educational opportunities worldwide, giving new hope to the poor. Your participation in Operation Rice Bowl will make the dreams of young people like Pailash achievable.

### **TESTS THAT CAN HELP YOU SAVE YOUR LIFE!**

Life Line Screening Radiology, LLC will be at St. Casimir's Church THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2008, between the hours of 8:30 am and 5:00 pm.

Please take a "pink" copy, that is in the back of each Church, explaining the services, instructions involved in the scheduling, and price.

Also note that PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED by calling 1-800-636-0418.



*The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." - Jn 4:9-10*

#### **READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 24, 2008**

Sunday: Ex 17:3-7/Rom 5:1-2, 5-8/Jn 4:5-42  
or 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42

Monday: 2 Kgs 5:1-15b/Lk 4:24-30

Tuesday: Dn 3:25, 34-43/Mt 18:21-35

Wednesday: Dt 4:1, 5-9/Mt 5:17-19

Thursday: Jer 7:23-28/Lk 11:14-23

Friday: Hos 14:2-10/Mk 12:28-34

Saturday: Hos 6:1-6/Lk 18:9-14

Next Sunday: 1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a/Eph 5:8-14/Jn 9:1-41  
or 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

#### **LIVE GOODS AND SERVICES AUCTION**

St. Mary's Institute

February 29, 2008

Silent Auction 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Live Auction begins at 7:30 p.m.

Professional Auctioneer

\$5.00 Admission Fee – Appetizers

Cash Bar

On-Line Auction in Progress at

[www.saintmarysinstitute.com](http://www.saintmarysinstitute.com)

#### **SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST NEWS**

##### **Weekly Parish Stewardship Report**

*Budgeted Expenses for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008: \$216,390.00*

The weekly collection needed to meet our expenses: **\$4,161.35** prior to fundraising efforts.

**Collection: 02/17/08 – Will be published next weekend**

**FEB. 23 USHERS:** Team #5

**PIEROGI ORDERS:** We will be taking orders for pierogi from March 3 to March 7<sup>th</sup> **OR** until we reach our "pinching" limits! Phone numbers to call to place an order are Irene at 842-4595 or Patty at 842-5712.

There will be a meeting for St. John's Religion teachers on Monday, March 3, 2008 at 6:30 pm in the rectory.

**ST. JOHN'S CHURCH LENTEN BUFFET:** The Annual Lenten Buffet will be held next Saturday, March 1, 2008 in the church hall after the 4:30 pm Mass. Tickets are \$9.00 for adults, \$4.50 for children from 6 to 12 years of age, and children 5 and under are free. Tickets can be purchased by calling Patty at 842-5712 or before the 4:30 pm Mass this week. NO tickets will be sold at the door.

**FAITH FORMATION:** Classes will resume this Sunday, February 24<sup>th</sup> at 9:15 am.

**FYI:** An Easter Buffet sponsored by the Religion teachers, students and parents is scheduled for Saturday, April 5, 2008. (This will take the place of the annual Ham & Turkey Buffet that is usually held in February.)

Please see the bulletin board for programs being offered at the Dominican Retreat & Conference Center in Niskayuna during the month of March.

**SAINT CASIMIR NEWS**

**Parish Stewardship Report**

Budgeted Expenses for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008: **\$188,494.02**

The weekly collection needed to meet our expenses: **\$3,624.89** prior to fundraising efforts.

**2/3//08 Collection: Will be published next weekend**

Next Sunday there will be the Diocesan collection for **Catholic Relief Services**. Please be generous.

**500 CLUB WINNER** - February 13, 2008- Christine Sommar #736 \$500.00 Congratulations!!

**FAITH FORMATION SESSIONS RESUME TODAY.**

The Faith Formation Students will be signing Easter cards for residents of our area nursing homes and are asking for donations of cards. Please bring them to the social center on Sunday mornings or to the rectory during the week. Thank you.

**A Family Perspective by Bud Ozar**

We share our faith with our children so that one day they will say; "We no longer believe because of your word; we have heard for ourselves and worship what we understand." But first, children must hear "your word."



**SAINT STANISLAUS NEWS**

**WEEKLY PARISH STEWARDSHIP REPORT**

Budgeted Expenses for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008: **\$400,627.04**  
The weekly collection needed to meet our expenses: **\$7,704.37** prior to fundraising efforts.

**02/17/08 Collection: \$4,638.00**

Weekly: \$3,426.00                      Monthly: \$946.00  
Fuel & Utilities: \$97.00              Liability Ins.: \$15.00  
Capital Improvement: \$23.00  
Black & Native Amer. \$86.00

**\*\*Initial Offering:** \$45.00 (to date \$1,034.00)

**\*\*Initial Offering** donations are used to defray the cost of mailing offering envelopes to our parishioners. **Total mailing cost for the year 2007 was approximately \$2,461.08,**

**LOOSE LEAF NOTES:**

Upcoming dates for **LEAF** sessions which take place after the 8:30 Mass:

**Sunday, March 2:** Sacrament of Baptism

**Sunday, March 30:** Sacrament of Eucharist

**Sunday, May 4:** Sacrament of Holy Orders

**Sunday, June 1:** Sacrament of Confirmation

Please join with our enthusiastic learning community as we energize ourselves in faith and support each other in the desire to live that faith in our daily lives. If you haven't tried out a LEAF session, this is your opportunity to branch out and blossom with us.

**THE HOLY NAME SOCIETY** will hold its next Corporate Communion on Sunday, March 9, at the 8:30 Mass. Members are asked to assemble in the Vestibule by 8:15 AM. Refreshments will be served at the monthly meeting which follows the Mass. **MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO ATTEND AND SIGN UP FOR THE PALM SUNDAY BREAD & BAKE SALE WHICH TAKES PLACE FRIDAY, MARCH 14, THROUGH SUNDAY MARCH 16."**

**"THE HOLY NAME SOCIETY** will be baking Babka and Grain Bread for its annual Palm Sunday Bread and Bake Sale Friday and Saturday March 14 & 15. Bread Baking starts Friday at 9 AM, an continues until NOON on Saturday. Members and anyone interested in participating are asked to sign up for one of the shifts: Friday 9 AM - 4 PM; 4 PM - 10 PM; 10 PM - 6 AM; and Saturday 6AM- Noon. Bread will be sold Saturday 9 AM - 4 PM, and Sunday 8 AM - 11 AM.

**WE ARE ALSO REQUESTING DONATIONS OF BAKED GOODS** for the bake sale, and items which can be assembled into a food basket and a basket of cheer. Items should be dropped off Friday after Noon or Saturday morning. To sign up to bake or to pledge other items, contact Paul Ochal ( 842-5144, PAULOCHAL1@verizon.net ) or John Szkaradek ( 843-3929, [jszkarad@nycap.rr.com](mailto:jszkarad@nycap.rr.com) )."

# **POUNDS FOR CASH**

see who can shed the most pounds and "bring home the bacon!"

Deacon Michael Ryba challenges Rev. David Wm. Mickiewicz

**Weigh-In: 216 pounds each**

D-Day: 11 May 2008 (Pentecost Sunday)

**How much will you pledge per pound lost?**

**CHOOSE**

whether your pledge will apply to "the priest," "the deacon," or "both" and

**SEND**

along with your name, address, phone #, and pledge per pound lost TO EITHER:

E-mail: [sscrectory@att.net](mailto:sscrectory@att.net) (subject: Pounds for Cash) or

Post: **Pounds for Cash**, St. Stanislaus, 73 Reid Street, Amsterdam, NY 12010

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**TREASURES N MORE THRIFT STORE** has new hours starting immediately - The store will be open on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:00am to **-2:00pm** and the first Saturday of each month from 10:00am to 1:00pm. Come and see what is "in store" for you!! Watch for special "surprises" coming in March!

FYI...the back basement room of the Center building, formally an extra restroom, has been redone by removing the restroom facilities and repainting as a storage area; the furnace room has been cleared of all unnecessary materials. This completes the work on the basement level. Please feel free to stop by or ask Joanne for a "tour".



*Please remember in your prayers:*

**Jean Lindgren – 1/24/08**

**Helen Kubas – 1/25/08**

**Mary Smith – 2/6/08**

**Gertrude Blongiewicz – 2/12/08**

**Matthew Zajackowski – 2/14/08**

**Rose Prill – 2/15/08**



# **MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK**

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25**

**Anna Kazyaka**, req. Sophie Syper

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26**

**Alex Rzasa**, req. Bernice Archambeault

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27**

**Frank Cetnar**, req. Susan Harrold and Jerry Smrtic

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28**

**Mary (Ann.) & Bernard (Ann.) Cebula**, req. Daughter-in-Law Maria & Family

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 29**

**Matthew Zajackowski**, req. The Werner Family

**SATURDAY, MARCH 1 (4:30 @ St. John's)**

**Helen Kaszuba**, req. Emily Rackowski & Family

**Sadie Gadowski**, req. Child & Grandchild

**Joan Crouse**, req. Charles & Sandy Curcurito

**Martha Czosnykowski**, req. Patricia & David Zarzycki

**SUNDAY, MARCH 2-8:30 @ St. Stan's/10:30 @ St. Casimir**

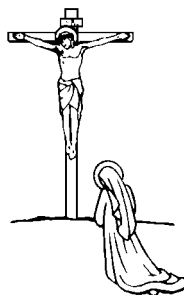
8:30am **Albert & Violet Wilk**, req. the Niemczyk Family

**Alice Lazicki**, req. Betty Allen

10:30am **Jeanette Andrzyczyk**, req. Bill & Bea Jasewicz & Family

**SANCTUARY LAMP – FEBRUARY 24-MARCH 1, 2008**

*In memory of Edna Kroup from Sophie Olbie*



## **YOU TOOK MY PARKING SPACE AT CHURCH**

One day, a man went to visit a church, He got there early, parked his car and got out. Another car pulled up near the driver got out and said, "I always park there! You took my place!" The visitor went inside for Sunday School, found an empty seat and sat down. A young lady from the

church approached him and stated, "That's my seat! You took my place!" The visitor was somewhat distressed by this rude welcome, but said nothing.

After Sunday School, the visitor went into the sanctuary and sat down. Another member walked up to him and said, "That's where I always sit! You took my place!" The visitor was even more troubled by this treatment, but still He said nothing. Later as the congregation was praying for Christ to dwell among them, the visitor stood up, and his appearance began to change. Horrible scars became visible on his hands and on his sandaled feet. Someone from the congregation noticed him and called out, "What happened to you?" The visitor replied, as his hat became a crown of thorns, and a tear fell from his eye, "I took your place."

When you finish reading this, say a prayer. That's all you have to do. There is nothing attached.