**Newsletter – Winter Quarter 2017-18**

Our church urges us to pray for vocations. By that it means we need more priests. I have another request that you pray for vocations – to Eucharistic ministry. We badly need more ministers.

The diocese authorizes us to have 100 Eucharistic ministers. Today we have 79. That’s not enough, which will be forcefully demonstrated this quarter. Virtually every serving Eucharistic minister will find himself or herself assigned to a Mass (or Masses) that they do not ordinarily attend – in several cases multiple times. In addition to that many ministers will find themselves assigned to more Masses than they usually do in a quarter.

Part of the difficulty this quarter is the number of special events – Masses for the Immaculate Conception, for the Christmas season and for Ash Wednesday. This is compounded by the number of ministers who asked not to be assigned to any Masses during the Christmas season. Also noteworthy were requests by 14 ministers to be assigned to the 4 p.m. Mass Christmas Eve (we need eight). Add that to the do-not-assign requests, and you can see the problem.

I have asked in the past that you give me the names of any parishioners you believe would be good additions to our ministry. No need to raise the matter with them. I will do that. Like a salesman I need leads. If you see me in church, and your candidate is there too, introduce us. If I’m not there, but a likely candidate is, introduce him or her to one of our priests in the context of interest in the Eucharistic ministry.

**Ministry Fair**. At a meeting several months ago it was decided to shift the annual Ministry Fair from autumn to winter. The idea is that parishioners are preoccupied with the beginning of school and the ramp-up of various activities in the autumn and that they might pay more attention in a less-busy time. So, to begin, a Ministry Fair will be held on February 10 and 11. Below are staffing assignments for the fair. The duties are simple: answer any question you may get about the ministry and collect the names of persons who wish to look into our ministry (sign-up sheet provided). You’ll be done in about 15 minutes.

5:30 Mass Tom and Ann Newell

7:30 Kellen Leister

` 9:00 Dave and Tracy Richardson

11:00 Helen Okunak and Jim McCulla

**A Significant Honor**. The Government of Peru has honored a Saint Luke Eucharistic minister with the highest award that the nation can give. Dr. Peter Klaren, who serves principally at the 11 a.m. Mass, and his wife, Dr. Sara Castro Klaren, received the Order of El Sol del Peru at a reception in the residence of Ambassador Carlos Pareja. Ambassador Pareja, in his citation, noted that Dr. Klaren “has authored many books about Peru, but among these I would like to especially highlight “Peru: Society and Nationhood in the Andes,” a book for many Peruvians, myself included, has become an invaluable source about the history of our country, and the changes that our society has witnessed since pre-Columbian times.” Peter is a professor emeritus of History and International Affairs at the George Washington University where he taught for more than 40 years. He has also taught at Dartmouth, Johns Hopkins, Georgetown, Washington State and the University of California-Irvine. Sara Klaren has had a long career in the promotion of Peruvian culture in the United States, organizing exhibits and symposia related to the social science and humanities.

**Some Housekeeping - the Dress Code**. Please be reminded of our dress code – coats and ties for men, compatible attire for women.

**Give the Coordinator a Break**. Report for Mass not two minutes before the entry procession; in fact not five minutes before it. Show up earlier so the coordinator will not begin to panic for absence of a sufficient work force. The other basic is, of course, to show up when assigned. Five Ems assigned to a recent 9 a.m. Mass failed to appear for duty.

**Mary and Christmas**

You can make a good case that as far as scripture goes, the central figure of the Christmas story is not the infant but the infant’s mother.

The major happenings of the Christmas event focus on Mary – The visit by the angel who gives Mary the extraordinary news that she will be the mother of a child who “will be called the Son of the Most High” (the *Annunciation*); Mary’s visit to her cousin Elizabeth in which Saint Luke’s beautiful prayer, the *Magnificat*, is attributed to Mary (The *Visitation*); and, with the baby coming, the urgent search through Bethlehem for shelter culminating in the birth in a stable (the *Incarnation*).

Forty days after the birth, when Mary and Joseph present the baby Jesus in the temple (the *Presentation*), Mary hears that a sword will piece her soul. Then, thirty-three years later, she stands at the foot of the cross and witnesses the brutal death of her son in the most tragic moment of her life.

Catholicism accords Mary the highest regard. She is, after all, the Mother of God! Millions of individual Catholics direct their devotion to God through Mary, according her “all but adoring love,” in the words of the theologian John Keble in a well-known hymn. This level of devotion was the cause of a centuries-old reaction against Mary among many Protestants who thought it overshadowed devotion to God.

However, in the recent history of Christianity, there has been a softening of Protestant attitudes about Mary. The distinguished Protestant theologian, Max Thurian, wrote in a 1985 book, that “Instead of being a cause of division amongst us, Christian reflection on the role of the Virgin Mary should be a cause of rejoicing and a source of prayer….It is both theologically essential and spiritually profitable to consider the vocation of Mary with some freedom.”

One of my favorite theologians, the late John Macquarrie, explained the new Protestant outlook in his book “Principles of Christian Theology.” Dr. Macquarrie, an Anglican priest, taught for years at the Union Theological Seminary in New York before becoming a professor of Divinity at Oxford.

The ways – partially historical, partially legendary - that Mary is presented in scripture led Fr. Macquarrie to believe that New Testament treatment of Mary accords her the title “Mother of the Church.” Pope Paul VI proclaimed this title for the Blessed Virgin when he adjourned the Vatican Council in 1964. Dr. Macquarrie said that this title, “more than any other provides an interpretation of Mary’s place in which Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants could agree.”

The gospel according to John reports that the dying Jesus addressed his mother and a disciple saying “Woman, behold your son…Behold your mother!” Given the highly theological – as opposed to historical –nature of John’s gospel, “it is surely highly probably that the words ‘Behold your mother!’ are addressed to the whole Christian Community,” the theologian writes.

What does this title mean? One meaning is that Mary played an indispensable part in the Christian drama of the incarnation. Another meaning sees Mary as a prototype of the church, according to Dr. Macquarrie . “Her free, cooperative obedience in the incarnation is demanded also of the church, if God is to be present and active in our world today.”

“Mary’s words, ‘Let it be done to me as you say,’ are a great confession of dependence and obedience, freely accepted. Here again she is the prototype of the church, for it is only through this free and complete submission and cooperation that incarnation can take place and God can work toward the kingdom”, Dr. Macquarrie writes. “In the ‘mystery’ of the annunciation, Mary freely gives up her humanity to the working of God’s grace, and in so doing pioneers the role of the Church as working with God.”

During Mary’s visit to Elizabeth she declares that she is “blessed among women” and says that “henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.” Fr. Macquarrie links the word “blessed” to the qualities of those whom Jesus called blessed when he proclaimed the Beatitudes. “The qualities set forth are those which we see also in the Blessed Virgin,” the theologian writes.

Father Macquarrie turned to the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard for “some very perceptive remarks about Mary’s relationship to Christ’s suffering” as she stood at the foot of the cross. “He claims” Fr. Macquarrie writes, “that Mary’s own suffering is not to be understood as only a natural grief at the sight of Jesus’s death, but as a sharing in his self-emptying, as if Mary were experiencing something of what Christ expressed in his cry of dereliction; and Mary’s suffering is experienced in turn by every disciple who knows (quoting Kierkegaard again) “the complete emptying of the human element in the face of God.’”

“So here again Mary appears as the prototype of the life of the church, which must share in the suffering of Christ and must indeed finally give up itself altogether as a distinct association if it is to be resurrected and transfigured into the Kingdom of God.”

There is another thing about Mary. “It may also be true that reverence for the Virgin satisfies a psychological need missed by a too masculine concept of God; and that such reverence encourages a kind of piety that is warmer and more personal than the austere and not very attractive virtues of the Puritans.” Dr. Macquarrie writes.

“It seems to me, however, that it is precisely a renewed theological consideration (consideration of what we believe and why we believe it) of the issues involved that will increasingly lead Protestants (as it has led some of them already) to abandon their negative attitudes toward Mary, and to join with their Catholic brethren (and with the New Testament) in a glad *Ave* *Maria*!”

Jim McCulla

November, 2017