Dear Friends in Christ,

God created us because he wants to be in relationship with us. He does not have to love us. God wants to. The reason we exist is relationship. We were made for love. This is a kind of Good News that is not possible without the Divine, for no other love for us is so pure, so unconditional, so freely given.

But, in spite of the perfection of this design, we are also broken by sin. Even though we are made for relationship, so many things separate us and limit the love for which we were created.

Our first reading for today reminds us that physical circumstances such as illness can separate us from one another. There are many other physical forms of separation, such as a job that takes a loved one far away, an emotional wound that demands physical distance as a response, a world-wide pandemic that has many people basically home-bound and the world on travel restrictions and, of course, death itself.

But spiritual separation also wounds us. Just as leprosy could be passed from one person to another, so also sin infects and hurts those around us. We can see how gossip or lack of integrity influences others. Selfishness or greed hurts those who are most vulnerable. The damage of sin is infectious, just as physical illness is contagious.

This is the brokenness into which Jesus enters with his mercy. If you wish, you can make me clean. The leper’s faith can lead us also to this confidence today. Jesus, the eternal Word of God, moved with pity, draws near to us! He reaches out to us, in a particular way through his sacramental presence at Mass, because he wants to heal every separation, whether it be physical, emotional, or spiritual. He does will to make us clean.

What wounds can we bring to him today? What broken relationship, separation, or sin needs his healing presence? This is why Christ invites us to His presence at Mass, because he wants to heal every separation, whether it be physical, emotional, or spiritual. He does will to make us clean.

I do will it, he tells us, be made clean.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Fr. Marco

PARISH OFFICE CLOSED Monday, February 15th in observance of President’s Day.

ASH WEDNESDAY MASS TIMES February 17 - Mass at 6:30 am, 9 am, 12 noon, and 7 pm.

ANNUAL APPEAL Thank you to all who donated to the Annual Appeal! This year’s theme is Seeking Christ to remind us in this time of hardship and need that Christ is the source of the healing, unity, and love that we all seek. Through our collective support of the Annual Appeal, we strengthen the Body of Christ that is our local Church, and we sustain her many charitable works that serve the spiritual and other needs of all those within and beyond our parish boundaries. Please consider a commitment to the 2021 Annual Appeal this weekend at home or in person. Your gift will be credited toward our parish goal. Learn more about the Annual Appeal at appeal.adw.org

CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS Thank you for your generous contributions throughout the year! If you would like to view a statement of your contributions to our parish, you are able to do so online—from your computer, smartphone, or device of choice. Just log in to your account at myihm.ihmrcc.org, navigate to the My Offering tab, view your Giving History, and click the Download button. Save or print the PDF file of your statement for your records. If you have not yet created a myHM login, doing so is easy! Visit Just visit myihm.ihmrcc.org, click on New User, and you’ll be prompted to create an account. For those that use our Online Giving option, please note that for banking security, your log-in credentials may be different on Online Giving and myIHM. If you would like us to print a paper copy of your statement, please contact Cindy Thompson at cindy@ihmrcc.org or 301-863-8144 ext. 14.

CATHOLIC ADVOCACY DAY Be a voice for hope and justice in Maryland. Join Catholics statewide for a virtual Catholic Advocacy Day on February 16th. Alerts on life, education and human rights will be provided. You just click and send, or call your legislators. Go to www.md catholic.org/advocacyday for details, to sign up for email and text alerts (you also can text CATHOLIC to 443-764-8765), and to send the alerts on February 16th.

MEN’S DISCERNMENT RETREAT Cardinal Gregory invites men in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, who are interested in learning more about the priesthood, to attend a discernment retreat led by priests and seminarians of the Archdiocese of Washington. The retreat will be held the weekend of March 26 to March 28 at Saint John Paul II Seminary and the Washington Retreat House in Washington, D.C. The retreat will be an opportunity to pray and reflect on God’s call, meet priests and seminarians, hear their stories, and learn more about the Seminary and priesthood. There is no cost to attend, but registration is required. Please register at https://dcpriest.org/young-adults. For more information, contact Fr. Mark Ivany at 202-636-9020. Please note that all COVID-19 protocols will be in place to ensure everyone’s safety.
**LITURGICAL CHANGES COMING ON ASH WEDNESDAY**

This coming Wednesday, you will notice two changes at Mass. The first applies just on Ash Wednesday and only during the pandemic (so hopefully only this year). The second is a permanent change at every Mass.

For the distribution of Ashes, the Holy See (that is, the central government of the Church) has determined that because of the pandemic, the priest will say the words “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” or “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” just once for all those in attendance. The ashes will then be distributed by sprinkling them on the top of the head, instead of making a cross on the forehead. This is actually the custom in much of Europe and in other parts of the world, and the instructions in the Roman Missal (the book with the prayers and other texts for Mass except the readings) do not specify how the ashes are placed on the heads of the faithful.

When the custom of distributing ashes at the beginning of Lent first developed around the eleventh century, men would receive them on the crown of the head (as we will do this year) and women on the forehead in the form of a cross (as we are used to in this country). This was probably because at the time women were required to keep their heads covered in church. Since we will be making use of the sprinkling option this year, please make sure you have your heads uncovered as you come up to receive the ashes.

The second and permanent change is that during the collect (the prayer at the beginning of Mass just before the first reading), the text in English will now end with the words “Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever”, with a slight adaptation when the prayer is addressed to Jesus Christ instead of God the Father.

Until now, the English text inserted the word “one” before the word “God”, something not found in the original Latin texts nor in other languages. This came about because the previous English translation was not quite precise when it concluded most of those prayers “…with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.” The new translation of 2011 added “in the unity” but left also “one”.

Why does this matter? The word “God” in those prayers (as intended in the original Latin) does not refer to the Holy Trinity but to Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity. Saying that Jesus is “one God” might be interpreted by some to deny that the Father and the Son are members of the Godhead. The phrase as we will now hear it was added to prayers in the fourth century to combat the Arián heresy that mistakenly taught that Jesus became God instead of always having been God, thus “for ever and ever”, a reference to Christ having been God from eternity. We may have a tendency to think of eternity as from now until forever, forgetting that it is really from forever until forever. Jesus Christ always was, is now, and always will be God.

Will this change make a huge difference for Catholics who properly understand the divine nature of God and (as much as humanly possible) the equality of the Persons of the Holy Trinity? Probably not. But it’s an easy enough fix to make, so why not make it. I just have to go through our missals and cross out the word “one” a couple hundred times. Please excuse Fr. Dan and me if our “muscle memory” kicks in and we say “one God” from time to time. I doubt your world will come crashing down!

**GARDEN AND GROUNDS MINISTRY** We have various projects around the church that need to be completed. Any adult or child would be welcome. If you want to volunteer, please contact Martha Davie by phone or text at 240-434-3510. Thank you!

**HEALTH SERIES** Discuss current nutrition and health topics, learn about low-cost, healthy recipes, and discover new ways to stay active and independent. Join Erin Jewell (erinj@umd.edu, 301-475-4485) for Fresh Conversations, a nutrition education bi-monthly program series for older adults (50+). Register for upcoming sessions at: https://go.umd.edu/Fresh ConversationsSTM2020.

**LOYOLA ON THE POTOMAC** Ignatian Weekend Retreats “We Journey in Hope” February 26-28 (Men), March 5-7 (Men), March 12-14 (Women). The weekend retreat fee is $245/ $195 for first time retreatants or young adults (35 years and younger).

**IHM MUSIC MINISTRY** If you are interested in sharing your musical talents with the parish, there is a place for you in this ministry! Please call Mary at 240-434-8876 (leave a message!).

**VIRTUAL SPIRITUAL DIRECTION WITH SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR** During this time of physical separation, Our Lady of Bethesda Retreat Center is providing virtual retreats so that you can connect with others and feed your soul. Currently, these programs are being offered at no cost, and a suggested donation of only $75 per person is greatly appreciated. For more information and to register, go to ourladyofbethesda.org.
FASTING AND ABSTINENCE FROM MEAT

Fasting: no more than one full meal on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (for those 18 to 60).

Abstinence: no meat on Ash Wednesday and Fridays (for those 14 and older).

Fuller Explanation:

In commemoration of Christ’s suffering and death, all Fridays throughout the year are days of penance, except if a Sollemnity should happen to fall on a particular Friday. The Church’s tradition and law is that we abstain from eating meat on Fridays as a communal form of penance that the entire Church performs together. Abstaining from eating meat is required on Fridays of Lent and encouraged on other Fridays. In the United States, we may substitute another equivalent penance on Fridays outside Lent, but some form of penance is still to be done on all Fridays. We also abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday. The rule on abstinence from meat applies to Catholics and catechumens (those preparing to enter the Church) aged 14 or older. Meat is defined as flesh from mammals and birds.

In addition to abstinence, fasting is required on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and encouraged on Holy Saturday, to honor the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, and to prepare ourselves to share more fully and to celebrate more readily his Resurrection. The fasting requirement applies to Catholics and catechumens between the ages of 18 and 60. For these purposes, fasting is defined as eating no more than one full meal that day. Two smaller meals are allowed if necessary to maintain strength according to one’s needs, but eating solid foods between meals is not permitted. There are legitimate exceptions for the seriously ill and for those who might endanger their own or someone else’s health (for example, diabetics, pregnant women, truck drivers, pilots, surgeons, etc.).

These, of course, are a bare minimum form of penance. The Church encourages us, for our own spiritual development and purification, to take up other penitential practices on Fridays and during Lent. Some choose to fast more frequently or abstain from other foods or activities. Some choose to take up additional spiritual and charitable practices (Stations of the Cross, Divine Mercy chaplet, service to the poor, etc.).

We ought to take up these penitential practices, not out of grudging obedience, but wholeheartedly, as a sign of our sorrow for our sins and the sins of others, as a sharing in Christ’s supreme sacrifice, and as a purification in preparation for the celebration of the Resurrection at Easter, and for our own resurrection into eternal life.

LOYOLA ON THE POTOMAC, A Jesuit Retreat House in Faulkner, MD is open for various retreat weekends, for both men and women. Directed and Private Retreats are also available. See our complete Retreat Schedule at: www.loyolaonthepotomac.com (301) 392-0800

HELP OUR MARRIAGE Do you feel alone? Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue, or have you just stopped talking to each other? Does talking about it only make it worse? Retrouvaille (pronounced retro-vi with a long i) helps couples through difficult times in their marriages. This program has helped many couples experiencing difficulties in their marriage. For confidential information or to register for the upcoming program, please visit: www.HelpOurMarriage.org, call (443) 400-7017, or email: 3015@HelpOurMarriage.org

BASKET AND BAG RAFFLE St. John's School is hosting a weekly bag and basket raffle through March 17. Each week, new designer bags and fun gift baskets are available. View the weekly options and purchase tickets at https://www.auctria.com/auction/SJSBagFundraiser. Raffle winners are announced every Friday at https://www.facebook.com/sjsbagbingo.

GOLF TOURNAMENT St. John’s School is hosting its annual golf tournament on Thursday, May 6, at Breton Bay Golf & Country Club. Check-in begins at 8 a.m. Shotgun start at 9 a.m. Scramble tournament. $125 per individual or $500 per foursome. $30 cheat packages (mulligans, throw, and string). Food and beverages included. Sponsorship opportunities available. Register at www.sjshollywood.org.

If you or someone you know is inquiring about the Catholic faith, please let them know to email our RCIA coordinator at RCIA@ihmrcc.org.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL OF IHM Our food pantry provides food to those who need assistance. We’d like to have you help us bag groceries from the food in our food pantry for our clients, or to pick up food from grocery stores in our area that donate to us. We do this throughout the week, excluding weekends. We have meetings just once a month. If you’d like to volunteer in our food pantry, please call 301-863-8193 on Mondays, Wednesdays or Fridays from 8:30 to 11:30 am, which is when the pantry is open. Leave your name and number and we will work to get you started as soon as you’d like.
COVID-19 VACCINES  Throughout the past few weeks, we have heard a lot of information about the testing and development of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. There have been continuous conversations within the Catholic community about the safety and morality of these vaccines, so we are glad to say that both Moderna and Pfizer have developed vaccines using mRNA, and without the use of controversial fetal cell lines. Similarly, both vaccines have been tested in an ethical way that is in line with previous moral statements made by Pope Benedict XVI and the Pontifical Academy for Life. Receiving either vaccine would be morally permissible in the Catholic Church and would also be an important pro-life decision that would help to defend the most vulnerable. Through our own personal actions and decisions, we can help to protect our neighbors from the coronavirus pandemic.

For more information on the vaccines and their development, you can review a Catholic Standard interview with Dr. David Diemert, a medical doctor and scientist who is part of a team researching a potential COVID-19 vaccine. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has also published a memo on this issue, and you can find more information on this topic at their website usccb.org. Finally, the Archdiocesan Office of Life Issues recently published an article with more information in the Catholic Standard at https://cathstan.org/.

BULLETIN DEADLINE Please email your submission to bulletin@ihmrcc.org by Wednesday at 10:00 am prior to the Sunday of publication. All entries are subject to editing.

ALTAR FLOWERS/SANCTUARY CANDLES If you would like to donate the Altar Flowers or Sanctuary Candles in memory or for special intentions of a loved one, please call the Parish Office or email at cindy@ihmrcc.org.

SING ALONG DURING MASS For those attending Mass in church, online, or in the parking lot, please join us in song at songs.ihmrcc.org.

LIVESTREAM MASS Join us for our livestream Masses: the 4 pm Mass on Saturdays in English, and 1 pm on Sundays in Spanish at mass.ihmrcc.org.

APOLOGETICS CLASS The next class is on February 22nd from 7 pm to 8:30 pm at St. John’s in Hollywood, in the St. Jude Room, of the Msgr. Harris Center. The next class will be “Do you have a soul?” Class is also available via Zoom: see the St. John’s parish website.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK THAT THEY MAY BE RESTORED TO FULL HEALTH Audrey Somers, Louise Shafer, Helen Daye, Kathleen Floyd, Mary Oliver, Judith Ann Allgood, Vince Guerin, Regan Corliss, Jack Makin, Belle Riddell, Corrine Geraty, Jane Keyon, Sarah Crecelius, Linda F. Gieser, Jim Brown, Ralph Gough Sr., Betty LePore, Adele Bavani Please note: names will remain on these lists for two months, unless otherwise notified. To keep a name on the list, please resubmit by contacting bulletin@ihmrcc.org, or call the Parish Office.

PAPAL PRAYER INTENTION FOR FEBRUARY We pray for women who are victims of violence, that they may be protected by society and have their sufferings considered and heeded.