



February 27, 2005 – Third Sunday of Lent

“ . . . whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst. . . ” John 4:14

† Servant Leader †

At the International Eucharistic Congress held in Mexico last Fall, Cardinal Jozef Tomko, the Pope's Special Representative, said in the opening Mass, "Ask who the Eucharist is, not what the Eucharist is." This is an amazing phrase that can be considered on many levels. Cardinal Tomko may be referring to the need to see the Eucharist less as something to be "received" and more as a relationship with Christ. It could be seen as a reminder of the presence of Christ in the community at prayer.

At the closing of the Mass, via satellite, Pope John Paul II said, "the world is in need of light in the difficult quest for peace that seems remote at the beginning of a millennium disturbed and humiliated by violence, terrorism and war. The Eucharist is light! In the Word of God constantly proclaimed, in the bread and wine changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, it is precisely He, the resurrected Lord, who opens the mind and heart and makes himself known, as happened to the two disciples of Emmaus when breaking the bread."

The Holy Father expressed his wish, "to have a more keen awareness of the Eucharist with more deeply felt celebration, with prolonged and fervent adoration, with a greater commitment of love for each other in the parish and service to the neediest." Pope John Paul II consistently makes the connection of the Eucharist to the church's mission to the poor and needy.

Holy Family Parish has been blessed with many opportunities to fulfill both aspects of the Holy Father's wish - daily adoration and special events centered around the Eucharist, and several programs to assist the poor and needy. I am grateful for these opportunities and for your responses to them.

MASS INTENTIONS

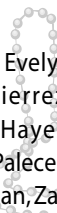
- Monday: Mary Jo Padilla +
Juanita Lozano -Int.
Boom Bayuga +
- Tuesday: Juanita Lozano -Int.
- Wednesday: Mike Pardue +
- Thursday: Eileen O'Connors +
Cledith France +
Sandra Sherburn +
- Saturday: Cledith France +
Jerry & Maria Kosan +



PRAYER CORNER

Remember in your prayers:

Mary Avila, Charles Black, Jill Boyd, Fr. Chris-Paul Egege, Evelyn Gonsalves, Max Guerra, Charlene Gutierrez, J. Gutierrez, R. Gutierrez, Amanda Hallmark, Gary Hayes, Stanley Hayes, Nikki LaTona, Tila Lenz, Mafua Family, Earl Mattingly, Nikki Palecek, Bud Phelps, Peter Popjevalo, Fr. Troy Powers, Christine Regan, Zan Rockett, Charles Schneider, Jo Ster, Clement Sweeney, D. Sweeney, I. Thompson, X. Thompson, Bishop Weigand, Jessie Williams



LENT - CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR THE LESS FORTUNATE:

Holy Family Parish is once again participating in the Diocesan Food Bowl program. The goal of the Food Bowl is to encourage every parish to do something during Lent in response to the needs of the less fortunate. On the heels of the Annual Catholic Appeal, the program has not been as widely publicized this year, but the familiar bowl, dressed in purple, has taken up its traditional place in the sanctuary - an appropriate place as the mission of the Food Bowl is at the core of the Gospel. The idea of the program is to take money saved from taking smaller, meager meals during Lent and set it aside for others in need. The savings are deposited in the Food Bowl, then collected and distributed to groups that request a grant. Last year more than 27 groups were supported throughout the Diocese.

CHRISM MASS 2005: The Annual Chrism Mass for the Diocese of Sacramento will be held Thursday, March 17, at 6:30 pm at Our Lady of the Assumption Church, Carmichael. You are invited to join Bishop Weigand, Bishop Garcia, the clergy, religious and gathered faithful of the Diocese for this important liturgical celebration.

The Chrism Mass is the Mass at which the holy oils used for sacramental anointing are blessed. There are three oils blessed at the Chrism Mass: the Oil of Catechumens, the first oil used in Baptism; the Oil of the Sick, used in Anointing of the Sick; and, the Holy Chrism, used in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, in the ordination of a priest or bishop and the dedication of a church building or altar. The oils blessed at this Chrism Mass will be distributed to all parishes and missions in the Diocese for use throughout the year.

Join your diocesan family for this sacred event.

CONGRATULATIONS: Mr. & Mrs. Gilbert Gonsalves will celebrate their 59th wedding anniversary on March 23, 2005!



STAY INFORMED - READ THE CATHOLIC HERALD:

Keeping up to date on news and events that impact the lives of Catholics throughout Northern California is as simple as reading *the Newspaper of the Diocese of Sacramento*:

The Catholic Herald

And, getting The Catholic Herald is as simple as calling (916) 452-3344 or the Holy Family Parish Office at 723-2494.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

- 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 (St. Katharine Drexel)
- Friday: Hos 14:2-10; Mk 12:28-34 (St. Casimir)
- Saturday: Hos 6:1-6; Lk 18:9-14





HOLY FAMILY SCHOOL'S Athletic Program is making a seamless transition this week from winter to spring sports as the ten basketball teams end their seasons and the spring sports begin. Girls' Softball team members tried out this weekend and, weather permitting, the season will open at the Holy Family Softball Field in a few weeks. The school's other spring sports -Track and Field, Golf, and Boys' Volleyball - will form teams and begin practice during March. All of the school's athletes will be recognized at the annual Athletic Awards Assembly in May.

Duttin* On The Ritz Presents



Holy Family Parish School's 12th Annual Auction Gala

*An evening of celebrating
with a few hundred of your closest friends...*

Silent and Live Auction Excitement • No Host Bar
Formal Dinner • Live Entertainment • Dancing

Saturday • March 12, 2005 • 5:00 pm
Holy Family Community Center



NEWS FROM THE KNIGHTS



Come join us next Sunday, March 6, 2005, for the Knights of Columbus Breakfast. Breakfast is served from 8:30 am to 11:00 am in the Community Center. We have added a new item this month - Biscuits and gravy - with eggs and all the trimmings. Come join us in a good time of fellowship, and have a wonderful breakfast.

We had two winners in the Knights District Basketball Free Throw Contest. There were 5 councils represented with a total of 50 shooters. Our hats off to Elena Peterson, age 10, and Tanner Piatte, age 11, who were the winners for our Council 4964 and District.

**HOLY FAMILY
LITURGY COUNCIL**

LITURGY COUNCIL MEETING THIS WEEK:

The next Liturgy Council meeting will be this Thursday, March 3, at 7:00 pm in St. Joseph Hall of the Community Center. (This is a variance from the date announced at the February meeting and our customary first-Wednesday meeting schedule, so please make a note of it.) The Council will finalize details on the remaining weeks of Lent, including Palm Sunday, and plan the liturgies that comprise the heart of the liturgical year - the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil) - as well as Easter Sunday and the beginning of the Easter season.

Stewardship
~ a way of life ~

HOSPITALITY MINISTRY:

Hospitality is part of the very foundation on which a parish family is built - that is why the Hospitality Ministry is so important. A Hospitality Minister, or Greeter, greets and welcomes people as they enter church before mass to help promote community spirit by affirming regular parishioners and making newcomers and visitors feel welcome. People's impression of Holy Family Parish is in many ways shaped by the presence or absence of a welcoming atmosphere when they come to Mass, and the Greeter is the first person they meet when they arrive at Church. Greeters also offer help in other ways, such as giving directions around the church or opening doors for those who need assistance. If you are interested in serving in this vital ministry, please call Fr. Kiernan in the Parish Office, 723-2494.

15TH ANNUAL CATHOLIC APPEAL:

Holy Family Parish has responded in a big way to the Annual Catholic Appeal. Contributions continue to come in, even though the main thrust of the Appeal has passed. We will hold off for one more week on reporting the total numbers of Holy Family's response to the Appeal as we gather the final contributions and pledges. Thank you again for your tremendous generosity - though that may begin to sound familiar, never underestimate the heart-felt gratitude for your continued faithful stewardship!

STEWARDSHIP - TREASURE

GENERAL COLLECTION	
Weekly Goal	\$ 10,000.00
Jan 30	\$ 10,635.00
Feb 6	\$ 13,036.50
Feb 13	\$ 9,981.00
Feb 20	\$ 9,316.48
Year-to-Date	\$ 332,620.00
Goal-to-Date (34 Weeks)	\$ 340,000.00
% of Goal Collected-to-Date	97.83 %
Annual Goal	\$ 520,000.00
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN COLLECTION	
Weekly Goal	\$ 3,750.00
Jan 30	\$ 2,880.00
Feb 6	\$ 4,369.27
Feb 13	\$ 995.00
Feb 20	\$ 2,948.50
Year-to-Date	\$ 82,503.45
Goal-to-Date (34 Weeks)	\$ 127,500.00
% of Goal Collected-to-Date	64.71 %
Annual Goal	\$ 195,000.00
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS	
15th Annual Catholic Appeal	\$ TBA
<i>As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. 1 Peter 4:10</i>	

YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST EVENT - MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Bishop Weigand has directed the Diocese, as a follow-up to the Diocesan Synod and in keeping with the spirit of the Year of the Eucharist, to set our focus on fostering a renewed understanding of the celebration of the Mass and to bring about a deeper understanding of the Eucharist.

Sister Eileen Mary O'Connor, RSM, a gifted and engaging speaker and a member of the Preparatory Commission for the Diocesan Synod, will be presenting a special program on the Eucharist for the people of Holy Family Parish.

Mark your calendar for Saturday, March 12, 2005 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm in the church. The presentation is open to all of our parish family, and it will be of special interest to all Eucharistic Ministers. For more information, please call the Parish Office, 723-2494.

A VERY SPECIAL EVENT AT HOLY FAMILY: On Tuesday, March 22, 2005, Holy Family Parish will welcome a very special guest, Josyp Terelya and his interpreter Dr. Roman Chruchly. The evening will begin with Mass at 6:30 pm.

Josyp has been imprisoned for over 22 years for his Catholic Faith in prisons and concentration camps in the former Soviet Union. He has been a bold defender of the Catholic Faith and the teaching of the Catholic Church. He has visited many provinces in Canada, almost all the states of the Union, and many countries in Europe, Asia and South America giving witness. He has authored 3 books. He has always been a witness to the truth of the Catholic Faith and of loyalty to the Catholic Church and Holy Father.

"I salute Mr. Terelya, for his courage, tenacity, and faith for standing up for human rights and religious, national and political freedom of expression. Terelya is an inspiration to people everywhere." - His Holiness, Pope John Paul II

HOLY FAMILY PARISH WOMEN'S RETREAT - FINAL NOTICE:

Will you join us on our annual Women's Retreat at Christ the King Retreat Center? "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (*Matthew 7:7*) Jesus is inviting you to share the gifts God has prepared for you. Our parish has a limited number of rooms available for the weekend of March 4-6, 2005. Just phone Barbie Meistas at 725-5973, Chyrl Marquez at 723-1468, or the Retreat Center at 725-4720 for information and reservations. Friends and relatives are encouraged to come together.

DISCIPLES IN MISSION: Lent is a special time set aside by the Church for renewal and conversion. Disciples in Mission will help you come closer to the reality of Jesus' call to be his disciples on the journey.

Disciples in Mission this week:

Prayer: Heavenly Father, our shepherd and king, you know us better than we know ourselves. Look into our hearts and see our yearnings to be close to you as we share our faith. Shepherd us, O Lord, beyond what we see in this world to your everlasting light. Amen.

Saint: St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

Verse: "The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want."
Psalm 23:1

STATIONS OF THE CROSS:

"We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world." Catholics have come together for centuries during lent to retrace the steps that Jesus took to win our salvation. Since the earliest days of the church, Christians have been telling the story of Christ's passion, death and resurrection. Pilgrims flocked to Jerusalem to see the sites where Jesus lived out the Passion, and they would follow in the footsteps of the Lord along the way of the cross as part of their pilgrimage visit.

Please plan on joining your united parish family each Friday night at 7:00 p.m. as we follow the way of the cross. The stations will be celebrated alternately (station to station) in Spanish and English every Friday, with the full text available in both languages for all stations. Holy Family is blessed with beautiful illuminated stained-glass windows depicting the stations. Come see, hear and feel the story of the Lord's Passion.

AND, AFTER THE STATIONS...**Soup Bowl and Bread Lenten Activity - The Poor Man's Meal**

After the Stations, a simple meal of soup, bread, crackers and water is served in the School Fine Arts Center. The meager meal is provided free of charge, but if you wish, feel free to leave a donation which will be used for ministry to the poor.

The following ministries will be participating in the Lenten activity and will be responsible for the following Friday meals:

March 4th	Bible Study Groups (Wed. A.M. & P.M.)
March 11	Hispanic Apostolate
March 18	Knights of Columbus

Come taste and see the goodness of the Lord!!

COMING GOOD FRIDAY - OUTDOOR STATIONS

Watch for more information on this wonderful annual event.

A Special Invitation from the Catholic HIV/AIDS Ministry and St. Francis of Assisi Church

On Wednesday, March 2, 7:30 pm, St. Francis Church, Sacramento, welcomes Nathaniel Dunigan and his inspiring presentation on Aidchild, which he founded in 2000 and continues to direct in Uganda, East Africa.

There are 2.3 million orphans in Uganda, more than any other nation in the world. Aidchild serves orphans with AIDS whose life expectancy is less than a month by providing homes, academies, clinics, and microbiology laboratories. Aidchild is where the miracles happen. Thanks to Antiretroviral Therapy, comprehensive care, and lots of TLC, most of the terminal diagnoses are reversed and the children begin to thrive.

Since it's beginning in 2000, Aidchild has become largely self-sustainable because of the generosity of numerous supporters.

Do you want to know more about Aidchild? You can find the website at www.aidchild.org or you can attend this special event on March 2, to meet Nathaniel and to hear the story live. Either way you can share in the miracle and lengthen the life of a far-away child with AIDS. Rather than an admission charge, a free-will offering will be taken.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE DIOCESE

Children of Abraham:

A Common Heritage, A Shared Future.

The Interfaith Service Bureau is sponsoring a dinner and discussion as part of "Children of Abraham" on Sunday, March 6, 2005, at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 2529 K St., Sacramento, CA.

This is the fourth in a series of ecumenical events supported by Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders to foster trust and cooperation and to build bridges of understanding in the community. Presenters will be Rabbi Brad Bloom, Dr. Metwalli Amer, Reverend David Thompson, Fr. Michael Kiernan and moderator Reverend Dexter McNamara.

Children of Abraham affirms our common religious roots in the figure of Abraham. From this foundation of kinship, we begin a dialogue, respecting each other's differing religious views.

The evening will begin with a dinner at 6 pm, followed by a discussion at 7:00 pm. Please RSVP to the Interfaith Service Bureau at 916-448-2212.

HEALING AFTER ABORTION RETREAT APRIL 8-10, 2005:

Struggling after abortion? Still seeking peace years after the choice? Experience the healing love of Jesus at Rachel's Vineyard Retreat, April 8-10 in Tahoe City sponsored by the Diocese of Sacramento. The weekend retreat will combine discussions, spiritual exercises, sacrament of reconciliation, memorial service and Mass. The cost is \$150 for meals, a room and ail retreat materials. Financial assistance is available.

For a registration packet or mote information, call Kathy at (916)733-0161 or 1-888-HOPE-790 or email kconner@diocese-sacramento.org. Inquiries and participation strictly confidential.

CATHOLIC PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS BREAKFAST CLUB:

Catholic Professional & Business Club meets next on Wednesday, March 9th, from 7:00 to 8:30 am at the Hilton Sacramento Arden West, 2200 Harvard St., Sacramento (Business 80 & Arden Way West.) Bob Dunning, host of the Bishop's Radio Hour (Catholic Radio AM 1620) will speak on "From Secular to Catholic Radio: Discovering God's Plan for Our Lives." To reserve your place, please register by calling (916) 930-1144 by Monday, March 7th at 12:00 noon.

BEGINNING EXPERIENCE OF SACRAMENTO:

The focus of "Coping with Life Alone" is to offer you the support you need to deal with the pain of your loss and to help you look with renewed hope toward a fulfilling future. It begins the healing process as the "Beginning Experience of Sacramento" support group explores feelings of grief, loneliness and loss.

This program starts Thursday, March 3, 2005, for 6 consecutive weeks from 7:15 - 8:45 PM. It is located at St. Michael's Episcopal Church 2140 Mission Ave. (between El Camino and Cottage) in Carmichael. A one time registration fee of \$10 is requested with a weekly fee of \$5 or \$20 for all six sessions. Scholarship are available upon request For information please call (916) 835-2282 or visit our website at: www.sacramentobe.org.

ALL NIGHT VIGIL FOR LIFE:

There will be an All Night Vigil for Life, March 4th - 5th, at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, 5751 Locust Ave., Carmichael. The Vigil begins on Friday with 8:00 pm Mass and ends on Saturday with 7:00 am Mass. Please join us for an hour or more or spend the night. If you need additional information, call June at 967-9158.

"I PLACE MUCH OF MY HOPE FOR THE FUTURE IN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER." - Pope John Paul II

Our Holy Father invites all married couples to experience the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend, which is a fantastic gift of the Catholic Church. For more information, call Raul & Gayla Ponce at (866) 825-2046 or e-mail srsregistrar@sbcglobal.net. Upcoming Weekend dates: March 11-13, Vallejo; April 8-10, Reno; June 24-26, Sacramento.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY:

Job Title - Clinic Manager

Organization - Sacramento Life Center, Sacramento Clinic. The Life Center provides free pregnancy testing and counseling to women faced with an unplanned pregnancy.

Description of Position - Registered Nurse to oversee licensed health clinic, including supervision of lay counselors and ultrasound nurses. 20 hours per week. Ultrasound training will be provided. Upon certification, Clinic Manager will provide ultrasound scans to clients as needed. Labor & delivery experience a plus.

Applicants must be pro-life. E-mail cover letter and resume to info@saclife.org or fax to (916) 447-4953.

Presented by

"GIFT - Growing in Faith Together," an Adult Education collaboration of Our Lady of the Assumption, St. Ignatius Loyola, Presentation and St. John the Evangelist Parishes:

"Common Threads of the Three Abrahamic Faiths: Reaching for Tolerance and Acceptance Within the Traditions of Catholicism, Islam & Judaism"

In four evenings, faculty from California State University, Sacramento, and Cosumnes River College will explore beliefs, practices, and spirituality of the three great monotheistic faiths, and conclude with potentials for understanding and misunderstanding within them.

WHERE: Our Lady of the Assumption Church
Corner of Walnut Ave. & Cottage Way, Carmichael

WHEN: Tuesdays, February 22, March 1, 8 & 15, 2005,
7:00 to 9:00 PM

COST: \$7 per session / \$25 for all 4 sessions

This series qualifies for renewal teacher certification credits under the category, "Profession of Faith." Questions? Call the OLA Religious Education office at 488-4626.

PARISH DIRECTORY AT-A-GLANCE

Pastoral Council - Consejo Pastoral

Cathy Sucharski 725-2053

Liturgy Council - Consejo Liturgico

John Wihl 722-7956 Francisco Borja 723-6309

Finance Council - Consejo Finanzas

Katie Martin 723-2494

Parish Bookkeeper - Contadora de La Iglesia

Fids Reina 723-2494

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Mauricio Marmol 723-2712

Youth Ministry - Ministerio de Jóvenes Grados 9-12

Jen Yearwood 721-8329

Junior High Youth Ministry - Ministerio de Jóvenes Grados 6-8

Katie Malone 721-8329

Health Ministry - Coordinadora de Salud

Clare Curran 725-7049

MINISTRIES & CHURCH AFFILIATIONS

Angelic Dusters

Mary Bustabade 723-2724

Catholic Ladies Relief Society

Margaret Teller 722-1197

Catholics Returning Home

Mike Allison 723-2205

Combined Capital Campaign

Tom and Maureen Poeschl 780-0254

Disciples in Mission

Tom and Maureen Poeschl 780-0254

Environment Committee (Liturgy Council)

Bonnie Johnson 722-2120

Eucharistic Adoration

Lee Lambert 723-8963

Evenings for the Engaged

Bill and Joyce Gray 723-8372

Feed the Needy

Nora Martinez 721-1176

Fellowship and Welcoming Ministry

Anita Marsolais 723-1775

Hispanic Apostolate

Frank Borja 723-6309

Knights of Columbus

John Norwood, Grand Knight 783-0453
Bill Swars, Deputy Grand Knight 722-5578

Loaves & Fishes

Evelyn Campagna 782-8976

Ministry to Sick

Young Stewart

Ministry to the Disabled

Amor Taylor 721-6071

Parish Vocations Committee

Young Stewart 332-8732

Preschool & Childcare (Holy Family School)

Lucy Eberhardt – Director 722-4620

Rosary Makers

Juanita Lozano 721-5343

Sacristans

Pat Regan, English 729-1330
Frank Borja, Spanish 723-6309

Scouts

Cub Scouts - Michael Pollard 723-1553
Girl Scouts & Brownies - Kelly Rusnak 791-6074

Senior Gleaners

George Schottgen 725-9667

Society of St. Vincent De Paul

Bill Swars 722-0264

Women's Council

Hope Estrada 729-1778

DIRECTORIO DE LA PARROQUIA

HOLY FAMILY PARISH BULLETIN

Published weekly

Weekly Deadline for Item Submission:

Monday, 4:00 pm, for the following weekend

For information, to submit a bulletin item or to place an ad:

Visit the Parish Office or call (916) 723-2494

or

E-mail: bulletin@holyfamilyliturgy.org

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II FOR LENT 2005

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. Each year, the Lenten Season is set before us as a good opportunity for the intensification of prayer and penance, opening hearts to the docile welcoming of the divine will. During Lent, a spiritual journey is outlined for us that prepares us to relive the Great Mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Christ. This is done primarily by listening to the Word of God more devoutly and by practising mortification more generously, thanks to which it is possible to render greater assistance to those in need.

This year, dear brothers and sisters, I wish to bring to your attention a theme which is rather current, well-illustrated by the following verse from Deuteronomy: "Loving the Lord...means life to you, and length of days..." (30:20). These are the words that Moses directs to the people, inviting them to embrace the Covenant with Yahweh in the country of Moab, "that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord, your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him." (30:19-20). The fidelity to this divine Covenant is for Israel a guarantee of the future: "that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them." (30:20). According to the Biblical understanding, reaching old age is a sign of the Most High's gracious benevolence. Longevity appears, therefore, as a special divine gift.

It is upon this theme that I would like to ask you to reflect during this Lent, in order to deepen the awareness of the role that the elderly are called to play in society and in the Church, and thus to prepare your hearts for the loving welcome that should always be reserved for them. Thanks to the contribution of science and medicine, one sees in society today a lengthening of the human life span and a subsequent increase in the number of elderly. This demands a more specific attention to the world of so-called "old" age, in order to help its members to live their full potential by placing them at the service of the entire community. The care of the elderly, above all when they pass through difficult moments, must be of great concern to all the faithful, especially in the ecclesial communities of Western societies, where the problem is particularly present.

2. Human life is a precious gift to be loved and defended in each of its stages. The Commandment, "You shall not kill!", always requires respecting and promoting human life, from its beginning to its natural end. It is a command that applies even in the presence of illness and when physical weakness reduces the person's ability to be self-reliant. If growing old, with its inevitable conditions, is accepted serenely in the light of faith, it can become an invaluable opportunity for better comprehending the Mystery of the Cross, which gives full sense to human existence.

The elderly need to be understood and helped in this perspective. I wish, here, to express my appreciation to those who dedicate themselves to fulfilling these needs, and I also call upon other people of good will to take advantage of Lent for making their own personal contribution. This will allow many elderly not to think of themselves as a burden to the

community, and sometimes even to their own families, living in a situation of loneliness that leads to the temptation of isolating themselves or becoming discouraged.

It is necessary to raise the awareness in public opinion that the elderly represent, in any case, a resource to be valued. For this reason, economic support and legislative initiatives, which allow them not to be excluded from social life, must be strengthened. In truth, during the last decade, society has become more attentive to their needs, and medicine has developed palliative cures that, along with an integral approach to the sick person, are particularly beneficial for long-term patients.

3. The greater amount of free time in this stage of life offers the elderly the opportunity to face the primary issues that perhaps had been previously set aside, due to concerns that were pressing or considered a priority nonetheless. Knowledge of the nearness of the final goal leads the elderly person to focus on that which is essential, giving importance to those things that the passing of years do not destroy.

Precisely because of this condition, the elderly person can carry out his or her role in society. If it is true that man lives upon the heritage of those who preceded him, and that his future depends definitively on how the cultural values of his own people are transmitted to him, then the wisdom and experience of the elderly can illuminate his path on the way of progress toward an ever more complete form of civilization.

How important it is to rediscover this mutual enrichment between different generations! The Lenten Season, with its strong call to conversion and solidarity, leads us this year to focus on these important themes which concern everyone. What would happen if the People of God yielded to a certain current mentality that considers these people, our brothers and sisters, as almost useless when they are reduced in their capacities due to the difficulties of age or sickness? Instead, how different the community would be, if, beginning with the family, it tries always to remain open and welcoming towards them.

4. Dear brothers and sisters, during Lent, aided by the Word of God, let us reflect upon how important it is that each community accompany with loving understanding those who grow old. Moreover, one must become accustomed to thinking confidently about the mystery of death, so that the definitive encounter with God occur in a climate of interior peace, in the awareness that He "who knit me in my mother's womb" (cf. Psalm 139:13b) and who willed us "in his image and likeness" (cf. Gen. 1:26) will receive us.

Mary, our guide on the Lenten journey, leads all believers, especially the elderly, to an ever more profound knowledge of Christ dead and risen, who is the ultimate reason for our existence. May she, the faithful servant of her divine Son, together with Saints Ann and Joachim, intercede for each one of us "now and at the hour of our death".

My Blessing to All!
From the Vatican,
JOHN PAUL II
