

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

833 Main Street
Agawam, MA 01001

www.stjohnagawam.com

sje.information@gmail.com

Office Phone: 413-786-8105 | Fax: 413-455-3100



Welcome!

No matter what your present status in the Catholic Church,
No matter what your family or marital situation,
No matter what your past or present religious affiliation,
No matter what your personal history, background, race or other,
No matter what your own self-image or esteem,
You are invited, welcomed, accepted, loved and respected here at St. John's.

EUCCHARIST:

Lord's Day Mass: *Saturday 4:00 pm, Sunday 8:00 am & 10:30 am (Ordinary Form) & 1:30 pm (Extraordinary Form)*
Weekday Mass: Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Friday at 8:00 am & Wednesday at 6:00 pm | Adoration: Wed. 12:00 - 6:00 pm

CONFESSION: Saturday 2:30 to 3:30 pm, Wednesday 4:30 to 5:30 pm, or by Appointment.

BAPTISM: Please call Deacon Dave Picard through the parish office to schedule.

MARRIAGE: To be arranged at least one year in advance. Please call the office.

ANOIDTING OF THE SICK: Is available in the Confessional every Saturday or see Father after Mass. If you or a loved one needs Father to come to you, please call the parish office.

CONFIRMATION: Takes place in 11th Grade, please contact the Director of Religious Education to enroll in classes. If you are an adult and need to make your Confirmation, please contact the same office and ask about the RCIA program.

HOLY ORDERS: Are you thinking about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life? Please call Fr. Pierz at the parish office, or call the Office of Vocations at (413) 452-0811.

PARISH MISSION STATEMENT: *We are a Roman Catholic community inspired by the Holy Spirit to follow the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by sharing, growing and spreading God the Father's love through our parish ministries, and by coming together as a community in meaningful prayer and worship to celebrate that love.*

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time — August 23, 2020

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

As Eliakim is given authority as master of the palace, so does Jesus confer upon Peter authority to bind and loose. To Jesus, who promised to be with his Church for all time, be glory for ever and ever!

PARISH OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Thursday - 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Friday - Closed

Pastor: Fr. Michael Pierz
sje.priest@gmail.com

Curate: Fr. Barrent Pease
sje.curate@gmail.com

Deacon: Deacon Dave Picard
sje.deacon@gmail.com

Priest in Residence: Fr. Sinh Trinh

Priest in Retirement: Fr. John Lis

Office Manager: Andreana Perkins
sje.operationsmanager@gmail.com

Parish Secretary: Sandy Ross
sje.parishsecretary@gmail.com

Reception Volunteer: Mary Talarico

Pastoral Ministry to Sick & Homebound:
Francesca Brandt
sje.homebound@gmail.com

Director of Religious Education: Claire Riberdy
sje.religiouseducation@gmail.com

Director of Music Ministry: Isabella Moser
sje.musicdirector@gmail.com

Maintenance Supervisor: Anthony Fernandes
sje.maintenance@gmail.com

Child Advocate: Mary Beth Swindell
Private Line: (860) 386-6009

Finance Council:

Alfred Casella (Chair)	Charles Calisti
Ted Muszynski	David Ross
Joseph Searles	Mary Socha

Pastoral Council:

Judy Cross-Donahue (Chair)	Ben Auld
Craig Bourque	Dale Marie Breault
Mikie Cook	Leo Marinak
James Perkins	Sarah Ross
Jane Seaver	Debbie Whitehead

Bulletin Submissions are due 9 days prior to print
Email: sje.parishsecretary@gmail.com

Thoughts from the Rectory ...

Dear friends of St. John the Evangelist,

“Who do you say that I am?”

These words of our Blessed Lord ring in our ears and hearts this weekend as we continue to follow the disciples’ path in the Gospel of St. Matthew. “Who do you say that I am?”

Facing this question is the lifelong task of those who would be disciples of Jesus. It is a question we must face in humility and trust. It is a question we spend our lives coming to understand and answering by our will. Who do you say Jesus is?

Do we know Him? Or do we just know *about* Him?

Do we follow Him? Or do we just go through the motions and say the words?

Discipleship demands a response that is fully personal and authentically discerned. To be a disciple of the Lord is to have a personal relationship with Him. Cultivated by prayer. Formed by Sacred Scripture. Nourished and sanctified by the sacraments. Discipleship is an interior movement of the soul as we follow the promptings of the Lord’s voice deeply within and continue to follow Him along the paths of our everyday lives and everything we do.

“Who do you say that I am?” Simon, one of the Lord’s first followers with his brother Andrew, exclaims “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”! He knew the Lord, not merely by flesh and blood, but by the revelation of deep faith and trust in God. He recognized Him, not as a mere image or object of devotion, but as a living and true God, an intimate and personal subject at work in his life and calling out to him.

Simon’s confession of faith is rooted in an openness to truly know Jesus and to follow Him with boldness. As Simon recognizes Him as the anointed one, the Messiah, the Christ, so too does Jesus lead him to recognize himself anew: “you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church”.

Christ Jesus builds His Church on a faith that sees beyond the things of worldly glory and human power to the things of Heaven and the truth of divine presence. He builds His Church on the simple, but total, faith of one called Simon, now named Peter. He builds His Church on the faith of men and women who would dare to trust and seek to believe. He builds His Church on *you*, once thought lost and far apart, now called *Christian*.

St. John the Evangelist, pray for us!

Fr. Pierz

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Saturday, August 22nd

4:00 pm Maria & Stanislaw Romanowski †

Requested by Their Family

Sunday, August 23rd

8:00 am For the People

10:30 am Willard Rivers-3rd

Anniversary †

Requested by His Wife

1:30 pm (EF) John & Cindy Mellen-
Spiritual Healing

Monday, August 24th-St. Bartholomew, Apostle

8:00 am Thomas & Edna Mazella †

Requested by Michael & Jane

Tuesday, August 25th-St. Louis & St. Joseph Calasanz, Priest

8:00 am Yolande Leblond †

Requested by Mabel Daigle

Wednesday, August 26th

6:00 pm Alex Fragoso †

Requested by Cecile Fragoso

Thursday, August 27th-St. Monica

8:00 am Tom & Steve Passanisi †

Requested by Rick & Cheryl Passanisi

Friday, August 28th-St. Augustine, Bishop & Doctor of the Church

8:00 am Jonathan Kratovil †

Requested by His Wife Marcella

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Saturday, August 29th

4:00 pm Mr. & Mrs. Liberatore Yacovone
and Mr. & Mrs. Cornelius Walsh †

Requested by Their Families

Sunday, August 30th

8:00 am For the People

10:30 am The Seaver Family-33rd
Anniversary

Requested by The Seaver Family

1:30 pm (EF) Frederick Wood †

Requested by The Maliszewski Family

SANCTUARY LAMP

AUGUST 23RD—AUGUST 29TH

WILL BE LIT IN MEMORY OF

ROSA TOUCHETTE

REQUESTED BY HER HUSBAND

If you would like to request the Sanctuary Candle to
be lit in honor of or in memory of someone, please
contact the parish office.

Please remember in your prayers:



Please pray for the sick and dying of our parish. Remember all who are in hospitals, nursing homes and homebound. Pray for the hungry, the unemployed and under-employed. Pray for an end to abortion and a true respect for all life, from conception to natural death. Pray for peace. In a concrete way we pray for all those who have died and all the deceased members of the parish.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.

And let perpetual light shine upon them.

May they rest in peace. Amen.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Note: If you would like to include someone who has recently passed away, please call the parish office or email: sje.pariahsecretary@gmail.com.

IN MY MOTHER'S ARMS PRAYER LINE:

If you have a serious intention that you need prayers for: surgery, sufferings, medical, illness, cancer treatment, a sick child, or anything like that, please give Pat (786-3023) or Mary (786-9671) a call and you will have countless rosaries and prayers.



ST. JOHN'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

YOU'RE INVITED !
TO AN INTRODUCTORY
MEETING ON....

**MONDAY,
SEPTEMBER 21,
2020**



Here we will begin to make plans for the upcoming *75th Anniversary of our parish* — next year, 2021! We have some plans in the works, but welcome any and all ideas, help, and/or historic memorabilia you would be willing to share and celebrate our 75 years!

We hope to see you there in the Father Joyce Room at 6pm!

Weekend of August 16th

“Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father”

Weekly: \$4,987.00

Maintenance: \$1,228.00

Fuel: \$157.00

Loose: \$870.00

Online Giving: \$2,088.31

Loan Repayment: \$475.00

Assumption: \$677.00

Total: \$10,482.31

“May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of His name, for our good and the good of all His holy Church.”

UPCOMING COMMISSION MEETINGS

CHRISTIAN SERVICE: Monday, August 24th
6:30pm in the Pastoral Center Office (PCO)

FAMILY & HUMAN LIFE: Monday, August 31st
6:30pm in the Pastoral Center Office (PCO)

Wondering how to get involved with the community of St. John's? Come and see!

ST. JOHN'S LADIES GUILD ANNOUNCEMENT

The Guild will be postponed until March 2021 due to the current COVID-19 crisis. Further information will be given to members as March 2021 approaches.

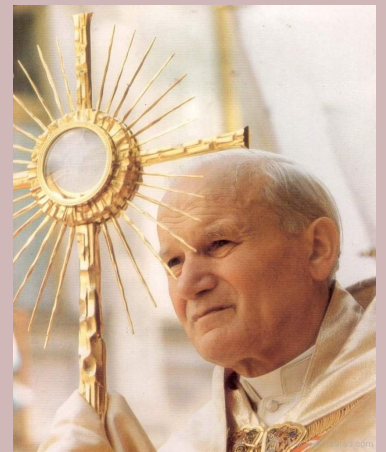
Any questions may be directed to the current Guild President, Miriam Assad at 786-3058. May all stay safe and healthy until we meet once again.

O, COME LET US ADORE HIM!

**Every Wednesday
12:00pm — 5:45pm**

with *Confessions* at
4:30-5:30pm,
and *Holy Mass* at
6:00pm

You are invited to
sign up for an hour of
adoration of the
Blessed Sacrament!



We are in need of people to cover all hours,
especially 3pm-4pm.

For more information, please contact Trish at 413-237-2662. Your time is so appreciated!

LATE HAVE I LOVED YOU,
**O BEAUTY
EVER ANCIENT,
EVER NEW,**

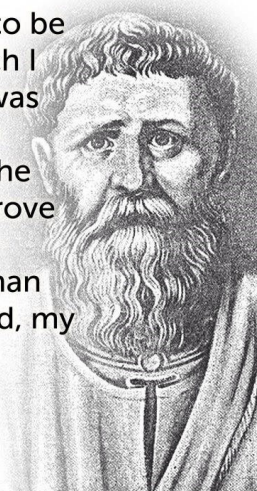
LATE HAVE I LOVED YOU! YOU
WERE WITHIN ME, BUT I WAS
OUTSIDE, AND IT WAS THERE
THAT I SEARCHED FOR YOU.

- SAINT AUGUSTINE



How sweet it was all at once to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose and was now glad to reject! You drove them from me, you who are the true, the sovereign joy. You drove them from me, and took their place, you who are sweeter than all pleasure . . . O Lord my God, my Light, my Wealth, and my Salvation.

SAINT AUGUSTINE



BETHLEHEM WOOD CARVING

Due to COVID-19 Massachusetts State restrictions, the Catholic Christians of the Holy Land *will not be selling their wood carvings* at St. John's this year.

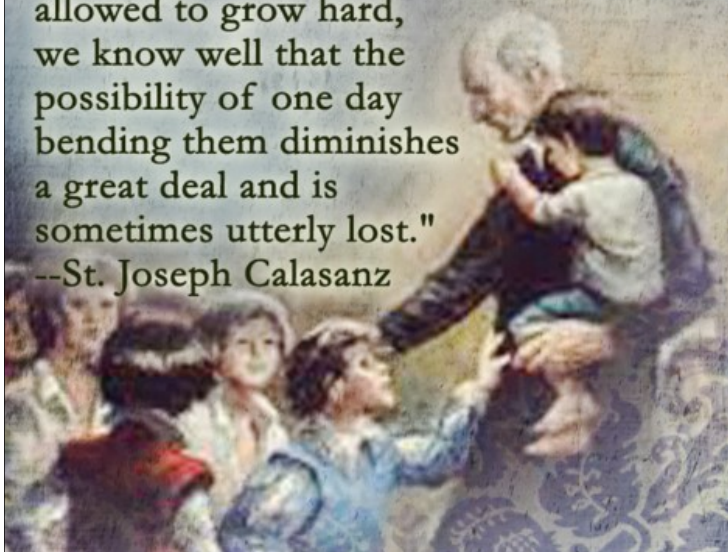


Please keep them in your prayers as they work towards keeping their livelihood.



"Moreover the strongest support is provided not only to protect the young from evil, but also to rouse them and attract them more easily and gently to the performance of good works. Like the twigs of plants, the young are easily influenced, as long as someone works to change their souls. But if they are allowed to grow hard, we know well that the possibility of one day bending them diminishes a great deal and is sometimes utterly lost."

--St. Joseph Calasanz



Ministry to Sick & Homebound
413-786-8105 ext. 105

PASTORAL MINISTRY HOURS:

Monday-Thursday from 9am-1pm.

Please leave your name and phone number, including area code, with a brief message if non-urgent. I will return your call as soon as I am able. ALL other calls requiring a priest, speak with our Parish Secretary, Sandy. Blessings and thank you for your patience.

FOOD GIFT CARDS: Your generosity of free will giving is gratefully appreciated by these families in their time of need. Thank you all for who you are and what you do in the name of Jesus Our Lord.

PRAYER SHAWLS: If you have a family member, friend, or know a person who is in need of extra comforting care, please feel free to contact our Prayer Shawl Ministry under Ministry to Sick & Homebound. Call Francesca at 413-786-8105 ext. 105. Leave a message and I will get back to you. Only requirement is that the Shawl must be picked up by the person requesting same, and delivered to the person in need of this comfort. There will be a Prayer Card placed with shawl of the knitter who crafted this shawl of prayerful love.

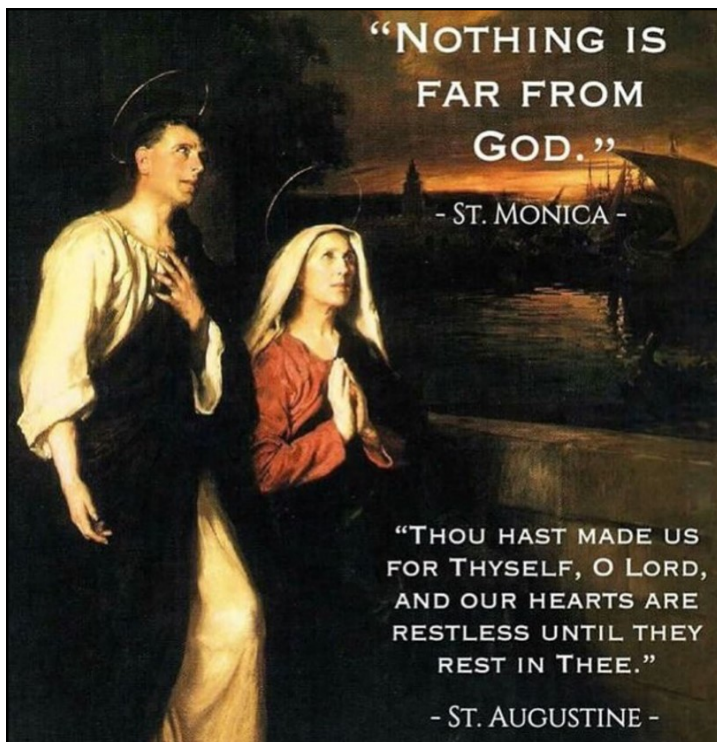
BEREAVEMENT: If you have experienced any loss and are in need of Spiritual consoling, please call the Parish Office at 786-8105 ext. 105 for direct line to Pastoral Minister, Francesca. Please leave your name, phone number, including area code, with a message for a return call. All calls are confidential. Blessings.

HERITAGE WOODS: No participation at this time.

HERITAGE HALLS: No participation at this time at all campuses.

HOMEBOUND MINISTRY: If someone is at home and unable to have their own hands on experience with Our Lord Jesus because of illness or decline in movements because of restrictions, please, if you feel this will help, call me, so that I can reach out to the person and until I can once again visit in person. I will make a personal phone call where we can get to know each other, share our fears, hopes and spiritual likes, if any, and pray together. I will read the Gospel of the day to the infirmed.

HOSPITAL VISITS: HIPAA Medical Law restrict access to patient admittance information. Please call the Parish Office if you have a family member admitted to a local hospital in need of a visit by Father Pierz. Follow up in-house visits will be provided per Francesca.



54 DAY NOVENA

Prayer the Prayer of Reparation, Prayer of Exorcism, and the Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus once per day for 54 days.

PRAYER OF REPARATION

My Lord and my God,
We have allowed the temptation of the devil to move our hearts toward Presumption.
We think we are good enough.

We can recognize our attitude of Presumption whenever we simply do not show up for practice - whenever we do not make the effort to spend an hour a day with You.

At times we justify our Presumption because we have so many other things we "need" to do. We ignore the plain truth that "if Satan can't make you bad, he will make you busy."

At times we do not recognize in ourselves that we are the Pharisee who said "thank God I'm not like all those sinners back there." Too infrequently do we approach the Sacrament of Confession of sins.

Too infrequently do we examine our conscience and see we really are sinners.

Too infrequently do we say to ourselves that we are unprofitable servants;

for we have done only what we were obliged to do. So often we just do not recognize our Presumption. We turn to You Lord, in our weakness, and beg Your forgiveness for our Presumption, and especially for all the times we have failed to practice with and for Your Team,

for all the times we have let down our teammates. We love You, Lord, and we beg for the wisdom and strength to love You more.

We know, Lord, if You will it, it will be done. Trusting in You, we offer our prayer to You who live and reign forever and ever.

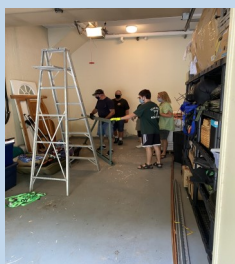
Amen.

THANK YOU!



Thank you to **Boy Scout Troup 77** for helping reorganize our storage garage making new space, adding shelves, and clearing out!

These young men worked hard last week, and now there's space for our maintenance cart, resident parking, storage and more in the garage. Your work and time is so appreciated!



PRAYER OF EXORCISM

Lord God of Heaven and Earth,
In Your power and goodness, You created all things.
You set a path for us to walk on and a way to an
eternal relationship.
By the strength of Your arm and Word of Your mouth
Cast from Your Holy Church every fearful deceit of
the Devil
Drive from us manifestations of the demonic that
oppress us and beckon us to faithlessness and fear.
Still the lying tongue of the devil and his forces so that
we may act freely and faithfully to Your will.
Send Your holy angels to cast out all influence that the
demonic entities in
charge of fear have planted in Your church.
Free us, our families, our parish, our diocese, and our
country from all trickery and deceit perpetrated by the
Devil and his hellish legions.
Trusting in Your goodness Lord,
We know if You will it, it will be done in unity with
Your Son and the Holy Spirit,
One God for ever and ever.
Amen.

LITANY OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

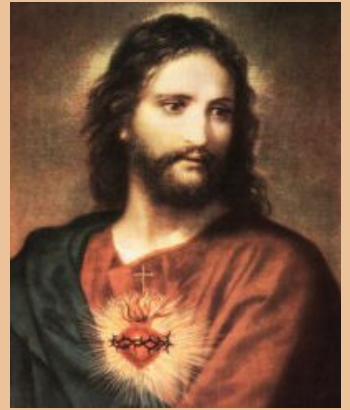


Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ graciously hear us

God the Father
of Heaven,
have mercy on us.
God the Son,
Redeemer of the world,
have mercy on us.
God the Holy Spirit,
have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, One God,
have mercy on us.

Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father,
have mercy on us.
Heart of Jesus,
formed in the womb of the Virgin Mother
by the Holy Ghost, ...
Heart of Jesus,
united substantially with the word of God,
Heart of Jesus, of infinite majesty,
Heart of Jesus, holy temple of God,
Heart of Jesus, tabernacle of the Most High,
Heart of Jesus, house of God and gate of heaven,
Heart of Jesus, glowing furnace of charity,
Heart of Jesus, vessel of justice and love,

Heart of Jesus, full of
goodness and love,
Heart of Jesus, abyss of
all virtues,
Heart of Jesus, most
worthy of all praise,
Heart of Jesus, king and
center of all hearts,
Heart of Jesus, in whom
are all the treasures of
wisdom and knowledge,
Heart of Jesus, in whom
dwelleth all the fullness



of the Divinity,
Heart of Jesus, in whom the Father is well pleased,
Heart of Jesus, we have all received,
Heart of Jesus, desire of the everlasting hills,
Heart of Jesus, patient and rich in mercy,
Heart of Jesus, rich to all who invoke Thee,
Heart of Jesus, fount of life and holiness,
Heart of Jesus, propitiation for our sins,
Heart of Jesus, saturated with revilings,
Heart of Jesus, crushed for our iniquities,
Heart of Jesus, made obedient unto death,
Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance,
Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation,
Heart of Jesus, our life and resurrection, .
Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation,
Heart of Jesus, victim for our sins,
Heart of Jesus, salvation of those who hope in Thee,
Heart of Jesus, hope of those who die in Thee,
Heart of Jesus, delight of all saints,

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the
world,
Spare us, oh Lord.

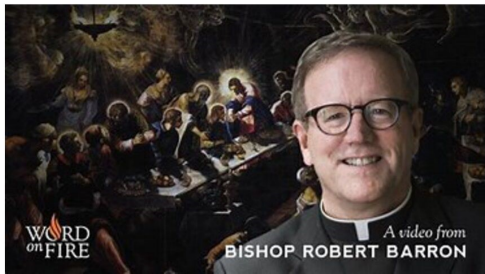
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the
world,

Christ graciously spare us.
Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the
world,
Have mercy on us.

Jesus, meek and humble of Heart.
Make our hearts like unto Thine.

Let us pray.
Almighty and everlasting God, look upon the Heart
of Thy well-beloved Son and upon the acts of praise
and satisfaction which He renders unto Thee in the
name of sinners; and do Thou, in Thy great
goodness, grant pardon to them who seek Thy
mercy, in the name of the same Thy Son, Jesus
Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, world
without end.

So you think you know what the Mass is all about? Think again!



Your kids have said it. Your teenagers have almost definitely said it. Perhaps your spouse has even said it. Maybe you've even said it, once in a while, particularly if the liturgy seems plodding, or the priest seems distracted, or the music is...as bad as it can sometimes be: "The Mass. Really? Why bother? What is the point of this?"

That question inevitably leads to other questions:

"Can't I just worship God anywhere?"

"Why do we need this incense?"

"Why do we have to say the creed every week?"

"It's the same thing, every week, why doesn't it ever change?"

"What's with all the up-and-down?"

Coming Soon...

Bishop Robert Barron's 'The Mass'

After so many weeks of being unable to attend Mass in our Church many have returned with a greater appreciation of what we may have taken for granted.

This new program from Bishop Barron will reveal aspects of the liturgy that will open the eyes of people who have gone to Mass for decades. It will even reveal to those on the margins and non-Catholics who may wonder about our intimate connection with The Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

Choose your day. The program consists of six, one hour sessions.

We will be using the Fr. Joyce Room in the Pastoral Center.

Registration is required as space is limited.

A Study Guide will be available for \$20.

Wednesday Mornings 10-11, August 26 to September 30th.

Thursday Evenings 7-8, August 27 to October 1

Sunday Afternoons, 3-4, August 30 to October 4

To register: **Leave your name and contact information with the office staff at: sje.parishsecretary@gmail.com or call @786-8105.**



Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

AN INVITATION THAT NEVER ENDS

- *Have you been worshiping with us, but never officially taken the step to become Catholic?*
- *Have you been away from the Church, and have now returned, but want to know more?*
- *Have you been a Catholic all your life, but never celebrated all the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist)?*
- *Have you joined us from a different background and would like to find out more about the Catholic Church?*

If you (“or someone you know”) answers YES to any of these questions, you are invited to find out more through process called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is a journey that begins with your questions. There is no obligation to join us as you discover more about your Catholic faith. The decision is ultimately yours to discern if this is to be your spiritual home.

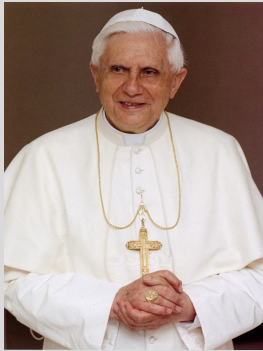
The invitation is always open: RSVP when you are ready! On behalf of the Catholic faith and the community of St. John the Evangelist Parish we look forward to welcoming you.

Informational Meeting:

Saturday, September 12th at 9 A.M. in the Fr. Joyce Room of the Pastoral Center.

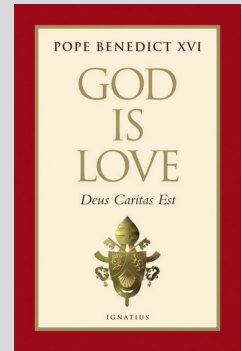
FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Call the Parish Office @786-8105 and a member of the RCIA Team will contact you.



ENCYCLICAL LETTER
DEUS CARITAS EST
OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF
BENEDICT XVI
TO THE BISHOPS
PRIESTS AND DEACONS
MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS
AND ALL THE LAY FAITHFUL
ON CHRISTIAN LOVE

PART I (CONTINUED)
THE UNITY OF LOVE
IN CREATION
AND IN SALVATION HISTORY



10. We have seen that God's *eros* for man is also totally *agape*. This is not only because it is bestowed in a completely gratuitous manner, without any previous merit, but also because it is love which forgives. Hosea above all shows us that this *agape* dimension of God's love for man goes far beyond the aspect of gratuity. Israel has committed “adultery” and has broken the covenant; God should judge and repudiate her. It is precisely at this point that God is revealed to be God and not man: “How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! ... My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst” (*Hos* 11:8-9). God's passionate love for his people—for humanity—is at the same time a forgiving love. It is so great that it turns God against himself, his love against his justice. Here Christians can see a dim prefigurement of the mystery of the Cross: so great is God's love for man that by becoming man he follows him even into death, and so reconciles justice and love.

The philosophical dimension to be noted in this biblical vision, and its importance from the standpoint of the history of religions, lies in the fact that on the one hand we find ourselves before a strictly metaphysical image of God: God is the absolute and ultimate source of all being; but this universal principle of creation—the *Logos*, primordial reason—is at the same time a lover with all the passion of a true love. *Eros* is thus supremely ennobled, yet at the same time it is so purified as to become one with *agape*. We can thus see how the reception of the *Song of Songs* in the canon of sacred Scripture was soon explained by the idea that these love songs ultimately describe God's relation to man and man's relation to God. Thus the *Song of Songs* became, both in Christian and Jewish literature, a source of mystical knowledge and experience, an expression of the essence of biblical faith: that man can indeed enter into union with God—his primordial aspiration. But this union is no mere fusion, a sinking in the nameless ocean of the Divine; it is a unity which creates love, a unity in which both God and man remain themselves and yet become fully one. As Saint Paul says: “He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (*1 Cor* 6:17).

11. The first novelty of biblical faith consists, as we have seen, in its image of God. The second, essentially connected to this, is found in the image of man. The biblical account of creation speaks of the solitude of Adam, the first man, and God's decision to give him a helper. Of all other creatures, not one is capable of being the helper that man needs, even though he has assigned a name to all the wild beasts and birds and thus made them fully a part of his life. So God forms woman from the rib of man. Now Adam finds the helper that he needed: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (*Gen* 2:23). Here one might detect hints of ideas that are also found, for example, in the myth mentioned by Plato, according to which man was originally spherical, because he was complete in himself and self-sufficient.

But as a punishment for pride, he was split in two by Zeus, so that now he longs for his other half, striving with all his being to possess it and thus regain his integrity. While the biblical narrative does not speak of punishment, the idea is certainly present that man is somehow incomplete, driven by nature to seek in another the part that can make him whole, the idea that only in communion with the opposite sex can he become “complete”. The biblical account thus concludes with a prophecy about Adam: “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh” (*Gen 2:24*).

Two aspects of this are important. First, *eros* is somehow rooted in man's very nature; Adam is a seeker, who “abandons his mother and father” in order to find woman; only together do the two represent complete humanity and become “one flesh”. The second aspect is equally important. From the standpoint of creation, *eros* directs man towards marriage, to a bond which is unique and definitive; thus, and only thus, does it fulfil its deepest purpose. Corresponding to the image of a monotheistic God is monogamous marriage. Marriage based on exclusive and definitive love becomes the icon of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa. God's way of loving becomes the measure of human love. This close connection between *eros* and marriage in the Bible has practically no equivalent in extra-biblical literature.

Jesus Christ – the incarnate love of God

12. Though up to now we have been speaking mainly of the Old Testament, nevertheless the profound compenetration of the two Testaments as the one Scripture of the Christian faith has already become evident. The real novelty of the New Testament lies not so much in new ideas as in the figure of Christ himself, who gives flesh and blood to those concepts—an unprecedented realism. In the Old Testament, the novelty of the Bible did not consist merely in abstract notions but in God's unpredictable and in some sense unprecedented activity. This divine activity now takes on dramatic form when, in Jesus Christ, it is God himself who goes in search of the “stray sheep”, a suffering and lost humanity. When Jesus speaks in his parables of the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep, of the woman who looks for the lost coin, of the father who goes to meet and embrace his prodigal son, these are no mere words: they constitute an explanation of his very being and activity. His death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form. By contemplating the pierced side of Christ (cf. *Jn 19:37*), we can understand the starting-point of this Encyclical Letter: “God is love” (*1 Jn 4:8*). It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move.

13. Jesus gave this act of oblation an enduring presence through his institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. He anticipated his death and resurrection by giving his disciples, in the bread and wine, his very self, his body and blood as the new manna (cf. *Jn 6:31-33*). The ancient world had dimly perceived that man's real food—what truly nourishes him as man—is ultimately the Logos, eternal wisdom: this same Logos now truly becomes food for us—as love. The Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate Logos, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving. The imagery of marriage between God and Israel is now realized in a way previously inconceivable: it had meant standing in God's presence, but now it becomes union with God through sharing in Jesus' self-gift, sharing in his body and blood. The sacramental “mysticism”, grounded in God's condescension towards us, operates at a radically different level and lifts us to far greater heights than anything that any human mystical elevation could ever accomplish.