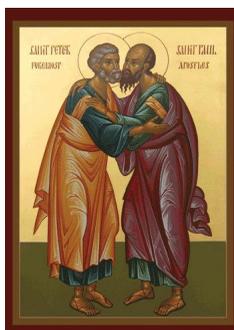




Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church



431 GEORGE STREET * BRADDOCK, PENNSYLVANIA 15104 * TELEPHONE (412) 461-1712

E-mail: stspeterpaulbc@gmail.com

YOU CAN WATCH US ON:

<https://www.facebook.com/SSPeterPaulBraddock/> or

on our web-page: <https://stspeterpaulbcc.com/on-line/>

YOU CAN SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO PARISH OFFICE

ADMINISTRATOR: FATHER VITALII STASHKEVYCH

PARISH OFFICE: 4200 HOMESTEAD DUQUESNE RD, MUNHALL, PA, 15120

TELEPHONE: 412-461-1712

Sunday, May 31st, 2020

Tone Festive

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SCHEDULE OF DIVINE SERVICES FOR THIS WEEK: (COULD BE CHANGED)

Sunday	05/31/2020	11:00 AM	Pentecost Sunday	+Kenneth Schell By Helen Petrosky (On-Line)
Monday	06/01/2020	05:00 PM	Pentecost Monday	+John & Anna Queer By Ed & Rick Queer Family (On-Line)
Sunday	06/07/2020	11:00 AM	Sunday of All Saints	+Daniel Horton By Mary & Dan Joscak (On-Line)

CONTRIBUTIONS

Dear parishioners!

If you are going to send your contribution to parish office please include your envelopes and write amount on them. It will help to quickly put them on record. We are printing our bulletins on Wednesday night. All envelopes received after Wednesday will go to the following Sunday. Thank You!

SICK AND SHUT-INS Please remember in your prayers our parishioners who are sick, homebound, hospitalized, living in nursing facilities, or need your prayers for their personal intentions:



Andrew Cencarik, Don Downey, Anna D. Fialkovich, Mark Fialkovich, Benjamin Kaefer, Jr., John Kopay, Jr., Sylvia Kopay, Mary Anne Ference Mistick, Richard Paloscko, Nancy Pcolar, Bob Newton, Rebecca McCullough, Will McCullough, Marie Churley, Joanne Skinta, John Gegick and Those serving in the Armed Forces, Gerry Petticca and Family, Mark Zafaras.

****If you have a family member in the hospital or other facilities, and would like us to remember them in prayer, contact Father Vitalii and we will be glad to publish their name in the bulletin – even if they are not a parishioner of Saints Peter & Paul Parish.**

LIVE STREAM VIEWING

Liturgy on May 20th was: 244; on Sunday May 23rd was 252.

JOAN SKINTA AT CARE CENTER

Woodhaven Care Ceeter, c/o Joan Skinta Room 107, 2400 McGinley Rd., Monroeville Pa 15146

SAINT NICEPHORUS THE CONFESSOR, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE



Commemorated on June 2

Saint Nicephorus was a dignitary at the court of the Empress Irene (797-802). After embracing monasticism, he became widely known for his piety. He assumed the Patriarchal Throne of Constantinople in 806 and became a zealous defender of the holy Icons. In 815, the Iconoclast Emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820) exiled him to Prokonnis, where he fell asleep in the Lord in 828.

Saint Nicephorus left behind three writings against Iconoclasm.

In 846, the relics of Patriarch Nicephorus were returned to Constantinople and placed in the Great Church of Hagia Sophia for one day before being transferred to and enshrined in the Church of the Holy Apostles.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP

We welcome anyone to become a parishioner of Sts Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church. Only those who are registered are considered members of the Parish. When one registers to become a parish member, they assume the responsibility of rendering stewardship of time, talent and treasure to this parish family. Worship at this parish is always expected. Registration is done only by the pastor.

CATHOLIC TEACHING

THE CHURCH'S ORIGIN, FOUNDATION AND MISSION

We begin our investigation of the Church's mystery by meditating on her origin in the Holy Trinity's plan and her progressive realization in history.

A plan born in the Father's heart

"The eternal Father, in accordance with the utterly gratuitous and mysterious design of his wisdom and goodness, created the whole universe and chose to raise up men to share in his own divine life," to which he calls all men in his Son. "The Father . . . determined to call together in a holy Church those who should believe in Christ." This "family of God" is gradually formed and takes shape during the stages of human history, in keeping with the Father's plan. In fact, "already present in figure at the beginning of the world, this Church was prepared in marvellous fashion in the history of the people of Israel and the old Advance. Established in this last age of the world and made manifest in the outpouring of the Spirit, it will be brought to glorious completion at the end of time."

The Church - foreshadowed from the world's beginning

Christians of the first centuries said, "The world was created for the sake of the Church." God created the world for the sake of communion with his divine life, a communion brought about by the "convocation" of men in Christ, and this "convocation" is the Church. the Church is the goal of all things,¹⁵⁴ and God permitted such painful upheavals as the angels' fall and man's sin only as occasions and means for displaying all the power of his arm and the whole measure of the love he wanted to give the world:*Just as God's will is creation and is called "the world," so his intention is the salvation of men, and it is called "the Church."*

The Church - prepared for in the Old Covenant

The gathering together of the People of God began at the moment when sin destroyed the communion of men with God, and that of men among themselves. the gathering together of the Church is, as it were, God's reaction to the chaos provoked by sin. This reunification is achieved secretly in the heart of all peoples: "In every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable" to God.

The remote preparation for this gathering together of the People of God begins when he calls Abraham and promises that he will become the father of a great people. Its immediate preparation begins with Israel's election as the People of God. By this election, Israel is to be the sign of the future gathering of All nations. But the prophets accuse Israel of breaking the covenant and behaving like a prostitute. They announce a new and eternal covenant. "Christ instituted this New Covenant."

The Church - instituted by Christ Jesus

It was the Son's task to accomplish the Father's plan of salvation in the fullness of time. Its accomplishment was the reason for his being sent. "The Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Reign of God, promised over the ages in the scriptures." To fulfill the Father's will, Christ ushered in the Kingdom of heaven on earth. the Church "is the Reign of Christ already present in mystery."

"This Kingdom shines out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ." To welcome Jesus' word is to welcome "the Kingdom itself." The seed and beginning of the Kingdom are the "little flock" of those whom Jesus came to gather around him, the flock whose shepherd he is. They form Jesus' true family. To those whom he thus gathered around him, he taught a new "way of acting" and a prayer of their own.

The Lord Jesus endowed his community with a structure that will remain until the Kingdom is fully achieved. Before all else there is the choice of the Twelve with Peter as their head. Representing the twelve tribes of Israel, they are the foundation stones of the new Jerusalem. The Twelve and the other disciples share in Christ's mission and his power, but also in his lot. By all his actions, Christ prepares and builds his Church.

The Church is born primarily of Christ's total self-giving for our salvation, anticipated in the institution of the Eucharist and fulfilled on the cross. "The origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of the crucified Jesus." "For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the 'wondrous sacrament of the whole Church.'" As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam's side, so the Church was born from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the cross.

("I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH")

PENTECOST SUNDAY

On today's great feast of Pentecost, we celebrate the Holy Spirit coming upon the followers of the Risen Jesus, which is the birthday of His Body, the Church. After the Savior's resurrection, He ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to His disciples so that they would not be cut off from the new life that He has brought to the world. The Holy Spirit is, of course, the third Person of the Holy Trinity, fully divine and eternal as are the Father and the Son. By being filled with the Holy Spirit, the Lord's followers participate personally and communally in the unity, power, and blessing of the very life of God by grace.

Unlike the period before Christ's Passion, the disciples now no longer think of themselves as students of a mere teacher, prophet, or king. They no longer struggle to accept the good news of His resurrection. Instead, they experience the new life of the Kingdom as "rivers of living water" flowing from their hearts. By the Spirit, they participate by grace in the life of the Holy Trinity. God is not remote, distant, or removed from them, but present in their souls. By God's presence in their hearts, they become truly who He created them to be in the divine image and likeness.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles as a group who were gathered together in obedience to the Lord's command. The divine breath which first gave life to humanity comes upon them as a mighty wind. The divine glory beheld by Moses in the burning bush now rests upon each of them personally as flames of fire. The divided speech of the tower of Babel is now overcome by the miracle of speaking in different languages so that everyone can hear and understand the praise of the Lord. Not the possession of any nation or group, this great feast manifests the fulfillment of God's promises for the entire world and every human being.

God creates us all in His image with the calling to grow in His likeness, actually to become like Him in holiness. As those corrupted by sin and death, however, fulfilling that vocation is beyond our ability. Only God is God, and our only hope is to share by grace in His eternal life. This glorious participation in the divine life is made possible to us at Pentecost. Human distinctions of every kind become irrelevant here, for all that matters is that we respond with faith, humility, love, and repentance as we receive the Spirit poured out on the whole world and on every generation.

With the Holy Spirit present in our hearts, linking us together organically as one, our fallen, divided humanity is restored. Just as Father, Son, and Spirit share a common life of love, unity, and holiness, we share a common life in Christ's Body, the Church. As particular people, we have the responsibility to believe, repent, and obey the Lord as we participate in the ministries of the Church and live faithfully each day. As members of Christ's Body, we are nurtured by worship, the sacraments, and spiritual instruction in our common life. The holy Tradition of the Church is the presence of the Holy Spirit, guiding the Body into ever greater knowledge of and participation in the life of the Holy Trinity.

For we receive the Holy Spirit not as isolated individuals, but as persons in communion, in loving relationship with Christ and with one another in His Body, the Church. The only proper way to celebrate Pentecost is to open ourselves as fully as possible to God's healing, transforming power in all areas of our lives. That is how we may become radiant with the divine glory as we celebrate this great feast of our salvation as living temples of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, now and ever and forever. Amen.

PROJECTS

After several thunder storms and strong winds, the roof shingles from our chapel on Monongahela cemetery came off. The **Welte Roofing** fixed it for \$ 500.00.

All walls and floor of our Social hall was fixed and painted. Total cost for materials (2 Five gallons of paint for walls; 2 Five gallons of paint for floor, paint brushes and all stuff for painting and fixing walls and floor etc.) and labor was \$ 2,100.00

PROJECTS

COST OF PROJECTS:	\$	2,600.00
All pledged & unpledged Donations received to Date:	\$	100.00
Shortfall:	\$	2,500.00
<u>All MONTHLY envelopes donations are going to pay off our projects</u>		

INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT: BOOK OF AMOS

Author: Amos of Tekoa, shepherd and cultivator of sycamore trees; Date Written: 750 BC

Amos is sent by God from the southern kingdom of Judah to the northern kingdom of Israel. The kingdoms had been divided during the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon's son (see 1 Kgs 12). Amos brings a harsh message to the rulers and people of Israel: God's judgment is coming because of their infidelity to him.

The book begins with a short prologue giving historical context and a thematic introduction. Then the Oracles, or prophetic sayings, Against the Nations begin (1:3-2:16). Next Amos launches into judgment oracles against the nation of Israel (3:1-6:14). Then we read of Amos' visions (7:1-9:10). Finally Amos presents an idyllic picture of a reunited kingdom of peace in which the people possess the land in all its fruitfulness (9:11-15).

There are few key pieces of information to keep in mind while reading Amos. First, Amos is sent to the northern kingdom of Israel. At this point in biblical history, the twelve tribes had split into two kingdoms: Judah and Israel. Judah's capital was Jerusalem and could claim the authentic line of David for its royalty. Israel had been established by Jeroboam I with its capital in Samaria. Second, Jeroboam I had set up golden calf idols and appointed people to be priests who were not Levites or sons of Aaron (1 Kgs 12). It is especially important to remember this fact when considering harsh texts like 5:21-27 ("I despise your feasts..."). God is rejecting a pagan cult which worshiped other gods (5:26, 8:14). The Israelites mixed their worship of the true God with the worship of many false gods. Third, Amos is prophesying in the time leading up to the Exile. Assyria conquered the northern kingdom in 722 BC, so Amos warns about the probability of exile because of Israel's disobedience about 30 years before it happened (5:5; 5:27; 6:7; 7:11). Amos' career is during the reign of Jeroboam II.

In the Oracles Against the Nations, Amos lists the sins of surrounding nations and declares God's punishment on them. Amos calls for a destruction of Israelite worship and the reuniting of the kingdom. He denounces unjust social practices and calls for a return to true worship of the Lord. He announces the end of the Jeroboamite dynasty (7:9). He prophesies of a day when the "booth of David" will be repaired and rebuilt, when all the people will dwell in peace and harmony under a true king who is a descendant of David. Amos' harsh message eventually gets him banished from the northern kingdom (7:12-14).

A few theological themes for meditation in this book are God's love for the poor and his desire for a just society. Also, the holiness of God's law is so great that it demands a great punishment on those who break it. In our times, as in Amos' there is a famine "of hearing the word of the Lord" (8:11). God does not desire to punish his people, but in many cases suffering is a necessary precursor to restoration.

CHURCH YEAR

Although the first of September is considered the start of the Church year, according to the Byzantine Church calendar, the real liturgical center of the annual cycle of worship is the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. All elements of Byzantine liturgical piety point to and flow from Easter, the celebration of the New Christian Passover. Even the "fixed feasts" of the Church such as Christmas and Epiphany which are celebrated according to a fixed date on the calendar take their liturgical form and inspiration from the Paschal feast.

The Easter cycle of worship begins with the season of Great Lent, preceded by the special pre-lenten Sundays. The lenten order of worship fulfills itself in Holy Week and the Great Day of Christ's Resurrection. Following Easter there are the fifty days of paschal celebration until the feast of Pentecost. Every week of the year is then considered in the Church's worship as a "Sunday after Pentecost." The weeks are counted in this way (First Sunday, Second Sunday, etc.) until the pre-lenten season begins again when the weeks are given their name and central content of worship in view of the annual return of Easter.

There are two special liturgical books for the Easter cycle of worship, the Lenten Triodion and the Easter Triodion (literally the Flower Triodion), which is also called the Pentecostarion. These books are called Triodions because of the "three odes" which are often sung during the church services of these seasons.

The Sundays and weeks following Pentecost also have their special book called the Octoechos which literally means the "eight tones." The Octoechos contains the services for each day of the week. Sunday is always dedicated to the Resurrection of Christ. Wednesdays and -Fridays commemorate Christ's suffering and crucifixion. Monday's theme is the "bodiless powers" the angels. Tuesday is dedicated to the memory of John the Baptist, Thursday to the apostles and Saint Nicholas, and Saturday to the Theotokos with the memory of the departed.

On each day of the week, beginning with the eve of the Lord's Day, the services are sung in the same "tone" or musical melody. There are eight sets of services in eight different "tones" (hence, the name Octoechos), sung in a revolving pattern throughout the year. Thus, for example, on the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost there would be Tone 1; the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost, Tone 2; the 4th Sunday after Pentecost, Tone 3, and so on until the 10th Sunday which is again Tone 1. This cycle of "tones" exists for every week of the year, although when the lenten season approaches the emphasis falls once more upon the preparation for the celebration of Easter.

In addition to the Easter cycle of worship with the "weeks after Pentecost," and existing together with it, is the Church's worship for each particular day of the year, each of which is dedicated to certain saints or sacred events. Each month has a special liturgical book called the Menaion which contains the specific service for each day of that month. The solemnity of the day is proportionate to the importance and popularity of the given saints or events to be commemorated.

There are twelve major feast days of the Church which are universally celebrated: the Nativity, Epiphany, Presentation to the Temple (called the "Meeting of the Lord") and Transfiguration of Christ; the Nativity, Annunciation, Presentation to the Temple and Dormition of Mary; the Exaltation of the Cross; and, from the Paschal cycle, the feast of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem, the feast of the Lord's Ascension and the feast of Pentecost. Easter is not counted among the twelve major feasts of the Church since it is considered by itself as "the feast of feasts."

Different Byzantine churches emphasize the other days of the year according to their particular relevancy and significance. Thus, the day of Saint Sergius would be greatly celebrated in Russia, Saint Spiridon in Greece, and Saint Herman in America. Some days, such as Saints Peter and Paul, Saint Nicholas, and Saint Michael, also enjoy a universal popularity in the church.



In the Eastern Church, Pentecost is one of the Byzantine Great Feasts and is considered to be the highest-ranking Great Feast of the Lord, second in rank only to Easter. The service is celebrated with an All-night Vigil on the eve of the feast day, and the Divine Liturgy on the day of the feast itself. Byzantine churches are often decorated with greenery and flowers on this feast day, and the celebration is intentionally similar to the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, which celebrates the giving of the Mosaic Law.

The feast itself lasts three days. The first day is known as "Trinity Sunday"; the second day is known as "Spirit Monday" (or "Monday of the Holy Spirit"); and the third day, Tuesday, is called the "Third Day of the Trinity." The Afterfeast of Pentecost lasts for one week, during which fasting is not permitted, even on Wednesday and Friday. In the Byzantine Tradition, the liturgical color used at Pentecost is green, and the clergy and faithful carry flowers and green branches in their hands during the services.

A popular tradition arose in both west and east of decorating the church with roses on Pentecost, leading to a popular designation of Pentecost as Latin: Festa Rosalia or "Rose Feast"; in Greek this became ρουσάλια (rousália). This led to *Rusalii* becoming the Romanian language term for the feast, as well as the Neapolitan popular designation Pasca rusata ("rosey Easter"). In modern times, the term in Greek refers to the eve of Pentecost, not Pentecost itself; or, in the case of Megara in Attica, to the Monday and Tuesday after Pascha, as roses are often used during the whole liturgical season of the Pentecostarion, not just Pentecost. John Chrysostom warned his flock not to allow this custom to replace spiritually adorning themselves with virtue in reception of the Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

An extraordinary service called the "Kneeling Prayer" is observed on the night of Pentecost. This is a Vespers service to which are added three sets of long poetical prayers, the composition of Saint Basil the Great, during which everyone makes a full prostration, touching their foreheads to the floor (prostrations in church having been forbidden from the day of Pascha (Easter) up to this point). Uniquely, these prayers include a petition for all of those in hell, that they may be granted relief and even ultimate release from their confinement, if God deems this possible.

All of the remaining days of the ecclesiastical year, until the preparation for the next Great Lent, are named for the day after Pentecost on which they occur (for example, the 13th Tuesday After Pentecost).

The Second Monday after Pentecost is the beginning of the Apostles' Fast (which continues until the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul on June 29). Theologically, Byzantine do not consider Pentecost to be the "birthday" of the Church; they see the Church as having existed before the creation of the world.

The Byzantine icon of the feast depicts the Twelve Apostles seated in a semicircle (sometimes the Theotokos (Virgin Mary) is shown sitting in the center of them). At the top of the icon, the Holy Spirit, in the form of tongues of fire, is descending upon them. At the bottom is an allegorical figure, called Kosmos, which symbolizes the world. Although Kosmos is crowned with earthly glory he sits in the darkness caused by the ignorance of God. He is holding a towel on which have been placed 12 scrolls, representing the teaching of the Twelve Apostles.

In the ancient Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, Pentecost is one of the seven Major "Lord's Feasts". It is celebrated at the time of ninth hour (3:00 pm) on the Sunday of Pentecost by a special three-segment prayer known as the "Office of Genuflection (Kneeling Prayer)". This feast is followed with the "Apostles Fast" which has a fixed end date on the fifth of the Coptic month of Epip [which currently falls on July 12, which is equivalent to June 29, due to the current 13-day Julian-Gregorian calendar offset]. The fifth of Epip is the commemoration of the Martyrdom of St. Peter and Paul.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

(ACTS 2:1-41)

L A N G U A G E V J J F A D F
 T T Z S B B B E O R I B A F I
 L F H D E B A E O R E Y E S E
 R M V R U D L P E F O P E A O
 N C Q A E E U G T F Y U E T Z
 E R Q M Q E D T P I G H I N E
 V R E A J O T E I N Z R D K T
 A E S Z A N N H O T I E B Q R
 E T U E D T V T O P L G D S I
 H E O D E S Z I S U O U I W Y
 F P H C U R D Y V D S Q M Y M
 F I O S I N L V O B T A Z U S
 Z S E E U O R M O C K I N G I
 T J U O H L K M F I L L E D L
 R P S B O M I G H T Y W I N D

AMAZED
 BAPTIZED
 DAY OF PENTECOST
 FILLED
 FIRE
 GOD
 HEAVEN

HOLY SPIRIT
 HOUSE
 JESUS
 JOEL
 LANGUAGE
 MIGHTY WIND
 MOCKING

MULTITUDE
 PETER
 REPENT
 SOUND
 THREE THOUSAND
 TONGUES

IMPORTANT UPDATES

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to let you know that we will be gathering again **FOR SUNDAY LITURGY THIS COMING SUNDAY, MAY 31**. It has been many weeks since we've gathered together to praise our Lord and receive the Sacrament together, but with Allegheny County being moved to "yellow" status by the state and with guidelines from Archbishop William, we will begin again.

As the coronavirus pandemic has not been entirely mitigated, we will be proceeding with caution and prudence, and remaining alert to any changes in the statistics which might bring on new restrictions or recommendations, but with gratitude that we will be able to gather once again. Some things, however, will be different.

- Our Divine Liturgy will be as normal, at 11:00 AM on Sunday morning.
- There will be no Divine Liturgy Books, bulletins, or other materials in the vestibule or the pews.

BULLETINS WILL BE SENT TO YOU HOME ADDRESS.

- The faithful are encouraged, but not required, to wear a mask over their mouths and noses while in the church.
- All those in attendance are to keep appropriate social distance from others – at least six feet between each individual or family unit. This means not sitting in pews directly in front of or behind anyone else, and leaving space between people on the same pew. We have a large enough church that this should not be a difficult problem.

NO BASKET OR PLATE WILL BE PASSED FOR THE OFFERING. RATHER, THE FAITHFUL WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO LEAVE THEIR OFFERING IN A RECEPTACLE IN THE BACK OF THE CHURCH IDENTIFIED FOR OFFERINGS. OR SAND YOUR OFFERINGS TO PARISH OFFICE

- At the time of communion, the faithful should come forward keeping at least six feet of distance between them and the person in front of them. Anyone wearing a mask should remove it before coming forward to receive the Sacrament.

- At the time of communion, the priest will wear a mask while distributing the holy Mysteries.
- **THE FAITHFUL ARE INSTRUCTED TO NOT VENERATE THE HOLY CROSS, ICONS, HANDS, OR ANY OTHER SURFACE WHICH CAN HOLD THE VIRUS.** One can make an act of veneration in one's hear with a simple bow of the head and a silent prayer.

- If you are coming and become ill, please call the Church office and leave a message so that a standby may be contracted.

After the Divine Liturgy, there will, unfortunately, be no gathering. The pews will be cleaned with sanitizer after the Liturgy and the faithful are asked to not visit the church between liturgies so as to keep the area sanitized. The faithful may speak to one another outside after liturgy, keeping appropriate social distance.

NOTE: THE ARCHBISHOP HAS RELIEVED THE SUNDAY OBLIGATION FROM ANY WHO ARE NOT IN GOOD HEALTH, HAVE OTHER MEDICAL RISKS, OR HAVE SERIOUS FEAR OF INFECTION BY THE VIRUS. IF YOU ARE FEELING ILL, WHETHER OR NOT YOU THINK IT MAY BE THE VIRUS, PLEASE STAY HOME OUT OF CHARITY AND CONCERN FOR YOUR FELLOW PARISHIONERS.

I wish, as I know all of you do, that our gathering together again would be as robust and full and joyful as it could be. Coming back "little by little," as it were, seems almost as if we cannot give the Lord all he deserves.

However, let us not forget that our caution and our social distancing are in themselves acts of love and care for those who are more vulnerable. And this is an act of service to our Lord who said, "whatever you do to the least of these, you do unto me." Our Lord wants, even more than our festivities, our wholehearted devotion and love.

I know that you all have been praying during this time of separation. And we will continue to pray for God's ongoing protection of our community, for the good of our nation and the world, and for an end to this pandemic. May God be merciful to us and bless us, show us the light of his countenance, and come to us.

ENCYCLICAL LETTER

My Venerable Brother Bishops, Health and the Apostolic Blessing! Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. Ex 33:18; Ps 27:8-9; 63:2-3; Jn 14:8; 1 Jn 3:2).

INTRODUCTION - "KNOW YOURSELF"

1. In both East and West, we may trace a journey which has led humanity down the centuries to meet and engage truth more and more deeply. It is a journey which has unfolded—as it must—within the horizon of personal self-consciousness: the more human beings know reality and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming ever more pressing. This is why all that is the object of our knowledge becomes a part of our life. The admonition Know yourself was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimal norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as "human beings", that is as those who "know themselves".

Moreover, a cursory glance at ancient history shows clearly how in different parts of the world, with their different cultures, there arise at the same time the fundamental questions which pervade human life: Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life? These are the questions which we find in the sacred writings of Israel, as also in the Veda and the Avesta; we find them in the writings of Confucius and Lao-Tze, and in the preaching of Tirthankara and Buddha; they appear in the poetry of Homer and in the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles, as they do in the philosophical writings of Plato and Aristotle. They are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart. In fact, the answer given to these questions decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives.

2. The Church is no stranger to this journey of discovery, nor could she ever be. From the moment when, through the Paschal Mystery, she received the gift of the ultimate truth about human life, the Church has made her pilgrim way along the paths of the world to proclaim that Jesus Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). It is her duty to serve humanity in different ways, but one way in particular imposes a responsibility of a quite special kind: the diakonia of the truth. This mission on the one hand makes the believing community a partner in humanity's shared struggle to arrive at truth; and on the other hand it obliges the believing community to proclaim the certitudes arrived at, albeit with a sense that every truth attained is but a step towards that fullness of truth which will appear with the final Revelation of God: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully" (1 Cor 13:12).

3. Men and women have at their disposal an array of resources for generating greater knowledge of truth so that their lives may be ever more human. Among these is philosophy, which is directly concerned with asking the question of life's meaning and sketching an answer to it. Philosophy emerges, then, as one of noblest of human tasks. According to its Greek etymology, the term philosophy means "love of wisdom". Born and nurtured when the human being first asked questions about the reason for things and their purpose, philosophy shows in different modes and forms that the desire for truth is part of human nature itself. It is an innate property of human reason to ask why things are as they are, even though the answers which gradually emerge are set within a horizon which reveals how the different human cultures are complementary.

Philosophy's powerful influence on the formation and development of the cultures of the West should not obscure the influence it has also had upon the ways of understanding existence found in the East. Every people has its own native and seminal wisdom which, as a true cultural treasure, tends to find voice and develop in forms which are genuinely philosophical. One example of this is the basic form of philosophical knowledge which is evident to this day in the postulates which inspire national and international legal systems in regulating the life of society.

To be continued...

ENCYCLICAL LETTER, *FIDES ET RATIO* OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF, JOHN PAUL II