

### ***Catholic Ministries Appeal Witness Talks***

As you have experienced, this weekend we have the pleasure of listening to witness talks given by your fellow parishioners as they share with you their commitment to the Catholic Ministries Appeal and why this is such an important endeavor in the diocese and in our parish. I thank you for the attention you have given to them as they have made their presentations to you.

May I add my voice to theirs in asking that if you have not yet made your pledge to the Catholic Ministries Appeal, that you do so soon. If you have already signed up for it, please know of my **THANKS** and appreciation for your participation. It is very, very important to the parish.

### ***Palm Sunday Vigil Procession***

Next weekend is Palm Sunday already! The formal liturgical title for the day is "Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord." "On this day the Church recalls the entrance of Christ the Lord into Jerusalem to accomplish his Paschal Mystery." (*Roman Missal*) With this day we enter into Holy Week, a week which culminates in the three days of the Sacred Paschal Triduum.

As we did last year, we will celebrate a special **Procession** for Palm Sunday. This **Procession** will be held at the 5:00 p.m. Mass next Saturday, April 12. Please note the following details:

- Confessions will be held at a special time, 3:00-4:00 p.m., and will end promptly at 4:00 p.m.

- At 4:00 p.m., the doors of the church will be locked. Everyone attending the Mass will gather in the school auditorium, where we will assemble for the **Procession**. Ushers will assist in direction people to the auditorium.

- The handicapped and others who would have difficulty walking will be allowed to enter the church, and they will wait there for the Procession to arrive.

- **Mass begins in the auditorium with Entrance Rites particular to this Sunday.** Then, after those rites, we **process in song** from the auditorium, along Wellwood Avenue, into the church.

- Mass then continues in the church.

- In case of inclement weather, we will simply gather in the church as usual.

What a beautiful gift the Church gives us in being able to celebrate Palm Sunday this way! What a beautiful expression of prayer it is to pray with our bodies as we walk the journey of entering into Jerusalem with the Lord! What a powerful way to mark our entry into this holiest of weeks!

Sure, it's a little different! Please don't grumble about it! If you are able-bodied, don't suddenly just show up with a cane or a walker to try to get out of being in the procession! It's a great thing to be able to pray in this way! I hope you will take advantage of this great opportunity to enter Holy Week by joining in this beautiful special liturgy.

### ***Be kind to folks next week!***

We all know that the attendance numbers will be up for the next two Sundays, for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. **Please be kind to the folks who come to Mass only a few times a year!** It is imperative that we "regulars" show our Christian faith-in-action by not resenting their presence. It is up to us to provide a warm welcome and a sense of hospitality. Let's all stay calm and cut everyone a little slack. Yes, the parking will be more crowded and traffic flow a little congested...yes, it will take a minute or two longer to get in and out of church...yes, you might be a little cramped together at Mass...yes, someone might commit the unforgiveable sin of sitting in "your seat"...but we should be glad that these people are coming to worship, and we have the Christian responsibility to love them and welcome them. Trust me, it will all be all right! Snarky glances and grumbling comments won't help, so let's all keep our sense of humor. OLPH really is a very welcoming parish...let's truly go out of our way to show that. You may just entice someone to come back more frequently. What can be said for sure is that someone definitely will not come back if they are greeted with rudeness.

### ***Covering images and statues in the church***

I'm sure you have noticed that our Lenten environment in the church looks a little more...well, Lenten! We have taken the

opportunity to observe the custom of covering (or removing, where possible) crosses and images throughout the church, a practice permitted starting the Fifth Sunday of Lent. Crosses will remain covered until the end of the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil. Since the environment perceived by our senses is an important part of our worship, we hope this custom facilitates your entrance into and spiritual participation in these last days of Lent, as we approach the Sacred Paschal Triduum and the fifty days of Easter Time.

### ***Reconciliation Monday***

Monday, April 14, a week from this Monday, will once again be our Diocesan Day of Reconciliation, always held on Monday of Holy Week. As with all other parishes in our diocese (and in the Diocese of Brooklyn and the Archdiocese of New York, I might add), OLPH will offer Confessions continuously from 3:00-9:00 p.m. What a great opportunity to come and celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, especially if you have been away from the Sacrament for a long time! I promise you will receive a warm greeting and there will be great joy! There is nothing better than feeling the weight of our sinfulness lifted as we go to Confession and hear the priest pronounce the words of absolution.

Make your plans now. Do make it a point to stop in on Monday, April 14, when there will be plenty of time...don't leave it until the last minute later in the week! If the door to a Confessional is open and the light is on inside, that means the priest inside is "open for business" — come on in! We might even have a priest just sitting somewhere in the church...if that's the case, go right up to him! Plan now on coming to Confession on "Reconciliation Monday," April 14.

### ***Plan Ahead: Celebrate the Triduum***

Also plan ahead so you can participate in the liturgies of the Sacred Paschal Triduum: the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday evening, April 17; the Commemoration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, April 18, at either 3:00 p.m. or 8:00

p.m.; and the Solemn Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night, 8:00 p.m. on April 19. In addition, Morning Prayer is celebrated each of those days at 9:00 a.m. in the church, and there is the diocesan celebration of the Chrism Mass at 11:00 a.m. on Holy Thursday morning at St. Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre. These days, the heart of our liturgical year and the holiest days of all, should not be business as usual, but rather should be days set apart and days "outside of time" as we enter deeply into the Lord's Paschal Mystery. I invite you to begin now to think about how you will make these days different from other days and how you will make the time to join in these liturgies.

### ***Easter Spiritual Bouquet Cards***

All the Masses on Easter Sunday will be for the intentions of the Easter Spiritual Bouquet Cards. If you would like to participate in this meaningful custom and have your intentions prayed for, please use the cards and envelopes available.

### ***Convent Leasing: Truth and Falsehoods***

About a week ago (the last full week in March) there was an issue that was going through the Lindenhurst community concerning the Town of Babylon leasing office space in our empty Convent building. Permit me to take this opportunity to offer some background and some much-needed factual information as clarification.

It is indeed true that the Town of Babylon had reached out to us about leasing space in our Convent for their Town Counseling Services. The space, therefore, would have been used for counseling offices, and, yes, the services provided would have included counseling those who suffer from issues with drug and alcohol abuse. This would have included family counseling also, for example. However, any characterization of the plan as "a drug treatment program for court mandated drug offenses" was inaccurate and was a distortion. It is unfortunate that some people chose to deliberately use inaccurate and inflammatory language and "code words" to incite emotional reactions against this. The truth is that only outpatient counseling would have taken place here. It was never going to be a walk-in clinic. It was

not going to be a half-way house. It was not to be a “rehab center.” It would not have been an in-patient facility, and it would not have involved all-day treatment. Clients were to be seen by appointment only. No clients would have been permitted to loiter on the premises. The depiction of the place as some kind of jail facility was false.

Many of the clients would have been from the Lindenhurst community and therefore are already in our midst as our neighbors, family members and friends; they are already here, walking our streets. I would think having people involved in a responsible program of counseling, seeking to improve their lives, would have been a good thing. Whether we want to admit it or not, the fact is that people with drug and alcohol addictions live next door to us now; isn't it better to be taking care of the problem by offering a healthy solution?

I believe the presence of those counseling services would have been a tremendous asset to the quality of life in Lindenhurst. There is no denying that there is a drug and alcohol problem in our community. The problem is already in the schools, despite the human tendency to try to deny it. Having the Town of Babylon Counseling Services right in the midst of the community and in proximity to the church would have been a presence of hope and a lifeline of light and healing for those needing help through counseling services, which is part of the Gospel mandate we have as baptized Christians. The presence of those offices would have assisted the church in our mission of reaching out and aiding those who are suffering and in need of help. Those people are already in our midst and in our community.

Quite frankly, I was disappointed by some of the comments I received from people in terms of their lack of compassion for fellow human beings and their unwillingness to recognize the God-given dignity of their brothers and sisters in the human family. Perhaps, after some prayer and soul-searching, we might need to change the way we look at those most in need, for example, those who suffer from drug or alcohol addictions. It is very un-Christ-like to look down on people who are in drug and alcohol recovery programs and to rob them of their God-given dignity as human

beings, treating them as lepers or as “those people.” As Catholics, we are the ones who should be beacons of light, assisting those who are trying to put their life back together through programs of drug and alcohol counseling, not beacons of darkness, shunning others and spreading fear and unfounded rumors. In fact, those counseling offices would have been providing services that are no different than services Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish is already providing in her social outreach ministry through the St. Vincent de Paul Society (assisting the poor), through counseling that takes place at the rectory from priests, and through twelve-step groups that meet on the premises. Our parish was a place of hope and assistance and a beacon of light in the aftermath of Super Storm Sandy, and the presence of those counseling services could have provided yet another avenue for the parish to assist in serving the needs of the vulnerable and those seeking to put their life back together in many ways. Our responsibility as Christians who follow the Gospel mandate, and as a parish community, is clear: we must assist those in need.

That people might have concerns is completely understandable. What's disappointing is that the issue was never allowed to reach the point where some kind of meeting could have been held, where dialogue could have been entered into to try to accommodate all legitimate concerns, and where people could have been brought together to discuss a vitally important issue. Instead, misinformation, gossip, and a large dose of fear ruled the day. That's unfortunate. All Christians should do the soul-searching necessary to make sure that we are never a party to such unhelpful practices in resolving issues.

However, it is all a moot point now, as completely different offices, with only administrative and other office functions (for example, the Green Homes Program), will be the only offices being leased by the Town of Babylon. This will still be helpful to OLPH Parish because of the income we will receive by leasing out the space in the Convent. I regret, though, that we missed an opportunity to provide some much-needed social service to our community right here on Wellwood Avenue. That would have been a powerful witness to our

Gospel values and our following of Christ's call which reminds us that whatever we do to our brothers and sisters, we do to Him.

***In conclusion...***

Together, let's aim high in Christ.  
Together, let's bring out the best in each other.  
Together, let's be the best we can be in Christ.

And let's always remember: LOVE IS A  
GIFT.

Sincerely,