



COVENANT NEWS

BUKÁS-LOÓB SA DIYÓS COVENANT COMMUNITY • ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

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POPE'S MORNING HOMILY:

Even the Most Holy People Sin 7 Times a Day

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At Casa Santa Marta, Francis Says Convert With Deeds, Not Words

“Each one of us, every day, does something ugly.” The Bible, in fact, says that even “the most holy people sin seven times a day.”

According to Vatican Radio, Pope Francis acknowledged this, while inviting faithful to work on converting with deeds and not words, during his daily morning Mass at Casa Santa Marta.

Drawing his inspiration from today's first reading of the Prophet Isaiah, Francis stressed, we see how the prophet exhorts us to avoid evil and do good.

The problem, the Pope said, lies in not getting into the habit of “living in ugly things” and not avoiding those things that “poison the soul,” that make it small.

But we have to work on doing good.

“It's not easy to do good: we must learn it, always. And He teaches us. But: Learn. Like children. Along the path of life, of the Christian life one learns every day. You have to learn every day to do something, to be better than the day before. To learn. Avoiding evil and learning to do good: this is the rule of conversion.”

No Fairy With Magic Wand

“Being converted doesn't come from a fairy who converts us with a magic wand: No! It's a journey. It's a journey of avoiding and of learning.” Courage, he said, is needed to learn how to avoid evil. “He, the Lord, names three concrete things, but there are many: seek justice, relieve the oppressed, give orphans justice, defend the cause of the widow... but concrete things. You learn to do good with concrete things, not with words. With deeds...”

“For this reason Jesus, in the Gospel we have heard, rebukes this ruling class of the people of Israel, because ‘they talk and don't act,’ they don't know concreteness. And if there is no concreteness, there can be no conversion.”

....Continued on page 4

COUNSELS

Authentic Worshippers!

THEME: We overcome temptation when we do the Father's will.

WORD: Ex 17:3-7 / Ps 95:1-2,6-7,8-9
Rom 5:1-2,5-8 / Jn 4:5-42

ORDER: ***Worship God in spirit and in truth.***
(cf Jn 4:24)

REFLECTION:

GOD the Father seeks those who worship Him in Spirit and in truth (Jn 4:23); therefore, worshipping Him from our heart and based on a true perception of Him is not optional but a necessity and should be our lifestyle!

Jesus says *worship Him in Spirit and in truth* because He wants us to worship the Father in Spirit that flows out of worshipping Him in truth. We do not worship in Spirit or in truth alone because when we worship in spirit alone, we are tapping into emotions, which change so quickly. We get “high” only for a while. Unlike truth that is seamlessly infused with worship, it is renewing, which leads to conversion and lasting transformation.

When Jesus said “*the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem*” (Jn 4:21), He was referring to externals, which are immaterial and insignificant. What is most important is the disposition of the heart, the totality of the person. The heart of the worshipper who is attuned to Spirit and Truth, is what counts. We are drawn to the reality of Who God is because we experience Him and we know Who He is. We offer our “*bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.*” (Rom 12:1)

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Promise of the Week

“Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst.” (Jn 4:14a)

WALK OR STUMBLE?

“Straight are the paths of the LORD, in them the just walk, but sinners stumble in them.” (Hos 14:10)

What does it mean to walk here?

Walk in the words of God, listen to what He tells us to do.

- to cast away all our iniquities, our sins, our impurities of the past, through confession with a promise of not returning to the same sins in the future,

- to return to the Lord, not just with gifts of material things, but with love for His words, through Bible readings, through prayers and the highest form of prayer, Holy Mass

- to walk in the Lord and with the Lord is to imitate Him, be like Him, especially during this season of Lent

- to fast, pray, help others with Acts of Mercy

- to abstain from giving negative remarks

- to remember that each time we say bad things against others, we do this to God. We are made in His image! If we tarnish the image of another person, we tarnish the image of God. Instead...

- be generous with our words; give authentic praise; compliment when we can; and know that it is better to be silent than to say something that would hurt.

We must remember also that words can be a curse or a blessing. When we try to control our tongues and hold back the negative things we want to say, we are on our way to walking with God. We walk with Him...

- When we make it a habit to say "I love you" to our loved ones

- When we try to reach out to our neighbors, being nice to them instead of being indifferent,

- When we try to go to Mass, and not just on Sundays

- When we try our best to do good things for family members (especially if we usually don't). After all, they are supposed to be our nearest neighbors!

There are many ways of walking with the Lord.

The opposite of to walk is to stumble....

- to stumble in the dark is....

- to continue to make the same mistakes over and over

- to blindly keep our heads up solely because of pride

- to insist on our old ways because of egotism (another word for pride)

- to avoid listening or reading His words

- to let our minds stray when we are in our ministry

- to be always negative, in words or in deeds, for the sake of being a *contrabida*

What is important is to remove the stumbling blocks. How? It is through the Sacrament of Reconciliation! Let us make it a habit of going to confession regularly. This is an important exercise in HUMILITY...
➔➔

Solemnity of the Annunciation of Our Lord

You've probably already heard that Jesus is fully Divine; and that when He was on earth, He was also fully human. This has been professed since the early centuries of the Catholic faith. One of the aspects of Jesus that to me proves that He is indeed God is that He was also human, just like me.

Man's perspective of God usually includes the notion that He can do anything... after all, He is God. That part of me argues that if He wanted to, He could have just taken the easier way out and just declared His creation, me, as saved, without having to sacrifice His Son.

But that would just be a God of mythology. What makes our God real, both Father and Son is that they did not claim a *God exemption*. Jesus also experienced death and suffering, as we do. Father God Himself felt the pain of losing His most Beloved – He lost a Son too. So, our God is not one Who exempted Himself from what it is that we go through; and because of that, to me, He is even more real.



Saturday, March 25 is exactly nine months before Christmas day; it's the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord. As Catholics, we are called to defend the sanctity of life, from conception to natural death. Christ, just like everyone on Earth today, was humanly conceived, but, yes, with the power of the Holy Spirit. So His life on Earth did not begin on Christmas day, but when He was conceived.

No, we don't have to exchange gifts; but maybe, as we approach Lent's mid-point, we can thank Him again for proving, in the most fundamental way, that He is our God, that He is there for us and will do whatever it takes to help us always to turn, return and return yet again, back to Him – our Divine and Human God.

➔ - Each time we decide to make a good confession, there will be opposing thoughts or alibis.

- But each time we make a good try, from the moment we decide on doing it and thinking of the sins to confess, God is working with us and we are walking with God.

Let us make a practice of saying an Act of Contrition everyday especially before going to bed. What an assurance of the way to Heaven and a way of walking with God!

Amen.

Learning and Teaching

In the reading from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, for Wednesday, March 22, Moses talks about the statutes and decrees that he was teaching the Israelites to observe. In the Gospel from Matthew, Jesus Himself addresses teaching – how one can teach others to break the commandments, and so become *“least in the Kingdom of heaven”* - or to teach obedience, and instead be called *“the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven.”*

While there really is an important role for teachers, there is certainly a role for learners too. And in this day and age, we all actually have a part as both. With information and opinions so readily available and put forward as facts, discerning what’s true has become more important than ever before. Therefore, we as learners have to be very careful about what we study; and as evangelizers, we must take our role as teachers just as seriously.

One of BLD’s programs that our members often cite as the thing that distinguishes our Community from other religious groups is the Saturday teachings of the CDFP (Christian Discipleship Formation Program). Once a month, teachers and volunteer instructors of the Teaching Ministry provide a forum for BLD members to further their understanding of our Catholic faith. Recently, the monthly Saturday sessions have been well attended by the members of recent encounters, and this is very encouraging.

While most older members have already “graduated” from the program, imagine how rich the interaction would be if the Saturday students would include those who have already officially completed the CDFP. And from the teachers’ perspective, no two teachers are alike; so each one brings unique aspects that they are able to share, even for the same topics. As a volunteer teacher, I know that in preparing for teachings, even for an already familiar topic, new insights into the material dawn on me that I am then able to relay to each class. It’s almost like Friday Word sharing circles where new things occur to us based on a particular Sunday reading, even if we’ve already heard the readings before. And the new insights are just as fresh and valuable as the ones from before.

The Saturday teachings are something that BLD members should be proud of and should be supported by graduates as well as the more recent encounters’ members. When so much of what’s out there caters to preconceptions and biases that can very easily lead us astray, let’s all invest one Saturday a month in our beloved BLD to expand our capabilities in these important roles, as teacher, to friends and family (and even strangers) who hear and see us, and always, as learners.

COUNSELS

(from page 1)

That’s why we are called the temple of the Holy Spirit, the place of worship, a living sanctuary, because in God *“we live and move and have our being.”* (Acts 17:28)

When the Samaritan woman experienced Jesus, her life changed from being distant, and from feeling unloved and lonely, to being joyful and free. She had within herself a spring of water that would last forever. She went back into Samaria to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah (Jn 4:29, 39-42); and many in the town also received the Living Water as they too, encountered Jesus and came to believe in Him themselves.



All of us may have our own “Samaritan woman by the well” story. Before my conversion to Catholicism, I had my own criteria for authentic worship. I came to worship on Friday and attended Mass on Sunday with my spouse and children simply as a spectator. Like the Samaritan woman, I felt like an outsider, different, always asking myself, “Am I in the right place?” Even though I was thirsty for truth and love, my heart was filled with resentments, and bitter root judgments against the Catholic religion. However, Jesus came to me during those moments of self-righteousness, uncertainty and doubt, and saved me. He changed my heart and my perception of the true meaning of worship. He showed me how He seeks real worshippers in the midst of real life from the least worthy like me: an arrogant person, a sinner; just as He had come to a worldly, irreligious harlot from Samaria, who became a fountain of life and was used by God to give life.

When we encountered Jesus during our Baptism in the Holy Spirit, He ignited the fire of the Holy Spirit within us and gave us a foretaste of His Mercy. However, Jesus wants us to partake of God’s Mercy at a deeper personal level until it springs up within us as a fountain of life. That’s why the Lord blesses us with a community that nurtures and promotes the love of His Gospel not only to feed our minds on the truth of who He really is, but also to share the truth with others through our various ministry works.

Through our CDFP and community teachings, our knowledge of God and our understanding of His glory grow deeper. By knowing Who God truly is and what He has done for us, our desire to love and to serve Him grows stronger.

.... Continued on page 4

COUNSELS

(from page 3)

We spend more time with Jesus in prayer; we read and reflect on His Word daily. We receive Him in Holy Communion and in the Sacrament of Reconciliation as often as possible, which gives us the grace to guard and cultivate our heart for God. By knowing the truth of Who God is, we become God's effective witnesses, because we are able to speak for God, not just in words, but by the way we live. We are able to bring God's goodness, love, tenderness and justice into our everyday life. We are able to bring God glory not just for an hour and a half on Friday, and an hour on Sunday, but every day through all our activities, because our whole lives become a manifestation of the excellence of God. Hence, our will becomes aligned with what the Father is seeking for our lives.

This is how we become real worshippers. This is how we continue the work of Jesus, Who is sending all of us to reap (Jn 4:38). Consequently, many will glorify God and drink from the Fountain of Life, and as Jesus promised, our thirst will be quenched forever (Jn 4:14a) and we will see the fields ripe for the harvest, the Lord, the Reaper, receiving His payments and gathering crops for eternal life. (Jn 4:35-36)

Directions:

1. Pray constantly and read and reflect on the Word of God daily.
2. Initiate reconciliation with your brethren and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently.
3. Attend Friday worship and Eucharistic Celebrations regularly.
4. Share the victory of Christ in your life.

Pope's Morning Homily

(from page 1)

The First Reading, the Jesuit Pope noted, then continues with the invitation from the Lord.

"Come, let us reason together." "Arise" – a beautiful word, Pope Francis said, a word that Jesus addressed to the paralytics, to the daughter of Jairus, as well as to the son of the widow of Naim. And God gives us a hand to help us up."

"And He is humble, He lowers Himself so much to say, "Come, let us reason together." Pope Francis emphasized how God helps us: "Walking together with us to help us, to explain things to us, to take us by the hand." The Lord is able "to do this miracle" – that is, "to change us" – not overnight, but on a journey.

The Invitation to Conversion

"An invitation to conversion, avoid evil, learn to do good... 'Come, arise, come to me, let us reason together, and let us go forward.' But [you might say] I have so many sins...' 'But don't worry' [God responds]. →→

A pdf of this Covenant News is also available online at BLDNEWARK.com

LORD'S PROVISION

Previous Week's

| Collections: | Prior Week | YTD |
|-------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Tithes & Love Offerings | \$ 2,304 | \$ 25,136 |
| Mission Collections | \$ 475 | \$ 2,060 |

Financial details are available to all members through treasury@bldnewark.com

Thank you for your continued support!

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

BLD-Newark
1992-2017



LSS # 47 March 31 – April 2, 2017

Contacts: Manny & Nette Manguiat – lexman@hotmail.com,
Earl & Flo Manguiat – bldnewarklsa@gmail.com

Retreat: Feel the Father's Love

(The Parable of the Prodigal Son)



Join us, with **Msr. Paul Schetelick** leading the Community in reflection and meditation.

Divine Mercy Auditorium
Saturday, April 22, 2017
11:30 am to 6:30 pm
(lunch will be served)

Marriage Encounter # 48

May 19-21, 2017

Hotel Executive Suites
30 Minue Street, Carteret, NJ
Contact email: MLA@bldnewark.com

| Marshaling | Schedule | Date | Apostolate |
|------------|----------|--------|----------------|
| | | Mar 24 | Mission |
| | | Mar 31 | Pastoral |
| | | Apr 7 | Evangelization |
| | | Apr 21 | Formation |

→ 'If your sins should be like scarlet, they will become white as snow.'"

This, Francis stressed, is the path of Lenten conversion.

"Simple. It is the Father who speaks, it is the Father who loves us, who really loves us. And who accompanies us on this path of conversion. Only He asks us to be humble. Jesus says to the rulers: 'He who exalts himself will be humble; and he who humbles himself will be exalted'."

Pope Francis concluded, recalling stages along the path of Lenten conversion: "avoiding evil, learning to do good, getting up and going with Him. And then, he said, "our sins will all be forgiven."