



COVENANT NEWS

BUKÁS-LOÓB SA DIYÓS COVENANT COMMUNITY • ARCHDIOCESE OF NEWARK

Volume 22 Issue 17

Bulletin Edition

April 22, 2016

NEWS

SPECIAL REPORT: AMORIS LAETITIA

(Source: rcan.org)

On Friday, April 8, 2016, Pope Francis released his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, or “The Joy of Love.” Pope Francis issued *Amoris Laetitia* in response to both the Third Extraordinary and the Fourteenth Ordinary General Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops in 2014 and 2015 respectively. Specifically, the pope wanted to “gather the contributions of the two recent Synods on the family, while adding other considerations as an aid to reflection, dialogue and pastoral practice, and as a help and encouragement to families in their daily commitments and challenges.”

The Exhortation in Brief

Pope Francis relies heavily on the final documents of the two aforementioned synods. In fact, the exhortation can be considered to be a strong affirmation of their conclusions. Throughout the work, he incorporates substantial sections of the two synods on the family.

He begins “The Joy of Love” with an examination of Scripture with its stories of families, births, love, and family crises. A substantial portion of this first chapter is devoted to a reflection on the first six verses of Psalm 128. He moves on to a consideration of the concrete realities that threaten and challenge the family in today’s world in chapter two: less support from social structures, extreme individualism, the speed and organization of life, migration, drug use, and pornography, to name just a few. In the face of these, Pope Francis encourages the faithful to both set forth Jesus’ demanding ideal, and yet never fail “to show compassion and closeness to the frailty of individuals like the Samaritan woman or the woman caught in adultery.”

The next chapter summarizes the Church’s teaching on marriage and the family. He also re-emphasizes the need to love those who participate in the life of the Church in an imperfect manner. This sets the stage for two chapters on love. Chapter four contains a beautiful reflection on 1 Corinthians 13:2-7. Pope Francis as pastor is in full relief here. In it, he demonstrates a deep understanding and sensitivity to the life of love as expressed

Continued on page 4

COUNSELS

Love One Another

THEME: We believe in the Risen Christ when we live a life that follows His commandment to love one another.

WORD : Acts 14:21-27 ~ Ps 145:8-9,10-11,12-13
Rev 21:1-5a ~ Jn 13:31-33a,34-35

ORDER: “*Love one another.*” (Jn 13:34b)

REFLECTION:

The Gospel reading for the 5th Sunday of Lent reminds us all to a greater commission. Many of us have been inspired by the spiritual journey of the great saints of our time. Perhaps our initial experience of conversion is something that we deeply cherish because it reminds us of how gracious and faithful our Triune God is.

In the Gospel of John 13:34, Jesus gave us this final commandment: “*Love one another.*” As disciples of Christ, have we acknowledged the true meaning of this great edict, proclaimed and epitomized by our beloved Jesus Christ? Or do we espouse the meaning of love only when the situation is confined within our comfort zones? In Luke 6:32 and 35 it says: “*For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them... But rather, love your enemies, and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High...*”

During their missionary journeys, St. Paul and St. Barnabas, exhorted the people of God by expressing the true meaning of love: “*It is necessary for one to undergo many hardships to enter the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22). Love holds no bounds, convenient or inconvenient we are asked to express our love implicitly and explicitly.

Love encapsulates everything placed in one basket. In times of distress and desolation, love overcomes pain and sorrow through the power of forgiveness and understanding. In times of joy, love engulfs the heart with immense peace with triumph and exultation.

Continued on page 3

Promise of the Week

“...the older order has passed away... I make all things new.” (Rev 21:4b,5b)

BELIEVING WORKS

At the last supper discourse, in the Gospel of John, Jesus was preparing the Apostles for His return to the Father. After spending three years with Jesus they still did not truly know or understand Who Jesus was. I would imagine that Jesus answered the Apostles' questions with patience and love, but might have been slightly exasperated because they still didn't get it. Imagine how the apostles must have felt when Jesus told them, ***"Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father."*** (Jn 14:12). How can this be, that the apostles and followers of Christ can accomplish greater works than the master, Jesus.

Jesus' kingdom is one of power and authority. However, power and authority is not to be lauded over others, but utilized for the greater good of all, in an effort to bring all towards Jesus and through Him, to the Father. We see this example of power come to life most often through our community's intercessory ministry, our brothers, sisters, family and friends have had their pleas answered through the power of prayer.

Recently my daughter was granted acceptance into graduate school after being previously turned away. Through continued prayers to our Lord for guidance and healing from the disappointment, the Lord opened another door, and she will now be going to graduate school, the next step towards fulfilling her dream career. More importantly, for us, she is more cognizant of the love of God, and the intercessory power of Mama Mary, and that of the many prayers by those here present, and even the prayers in heaven by those who have gone on to their eternal rest. As believers in Christ we are open to see the hand of God in all things, even though more often, we fall victim to wanting to see the big miracles and great show of power.

One clear example of someone accomplishing great works on a grand scale is Mother Angelica, a cloistered sister, a simple person who lived a life of prayer and adoration. Through her love of Christ she was capable of overcoming the greatest of odds, founding one of the largest networks to proclaim the **Good News** of Jesus Christ. As Jesus promised, we are all capable of doing great works if we believe in Him and use that power and authority to help others and share the **Good News** of the Gospel!

Am I the Stranger's Voice?

"But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." (Jn10:5)

The word "shepherd" has always captivated my imagination, bringing up visions of Popes, Bishops, the great prophets and the greatest Shepherd of all – Jesus Christ Himself. Shepherding is such a humbling and worthy undertaking that one should grab the opportunity of being one, whenever the situation presents itself. I remember filling in as an under shepherd at the last minute (and with no experience to boot) on the very same day that shepherding was supposed to begin. "Do not worry," I was told, "the Holy Spirit will guide you all the way." I tried to project a calm demeanor but deep inside, I was churning in all directions. How I managed through the whole process, I honestly don't know. I just know that without any conscious thinking on my part, a key word would just pop up in my head whenever shepherding struggles arose.

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit." (Mt 28:19)

The Bible has lots of stories about real life shepherds and storybook shepherds. They all drive home the same point of the special bond between the sheep and the shepherd. We are all shepherds in our own small way. We are called to spread the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Some basic knowledge of our faith helps and BLD's formation program comes to mind. But the crucial question is **"How is my personal relationship with Jesus?"**

Without a personal encounter with Jesus, a hollow discipleship follows, guaranteed. On the other hand, encountering Jesus miraculously transforms our lives. Saul, the ruthless persecutor of Christians became St. Paul, one of the greatest defenders of the faith after his transformation.

In the Bible, the Pharisees and the Sadducees regarded themselves as upright and very religious people, but we know of the many stiff fights and clashes they had with Jesus. Not realizing it, they had morphed into false prophets. In their desire for wealth and power, they were feeding themselves instead of their sheep. They had become strangers to their own people, leading them to paths of destruction.

Jesus wants us to develop and grow in our relationship with Him. Jesus wants us to know Him up close, personal and intimate. No longer strangers, Jesus wants us to be His true under shepherds. This is now the question that guides me: Do I speak with a stranger's voice, or with the voice of the one true Shepherd?

The Bible's Most Important Verse

At a BLD retreat a few years ago, the retreat director had said that, to him, John 14:6 was the most important verse in the Bible. I have to admit that back then, I felt that I did not have a sufficient enough basis of my own to make that statement. I am indeed happy to say that since that time, I believe that I have immersed myself enough in the Word of God to emphatically agree.

"I am the way and the truth and the life." – Jesus

But I make that determination, not just from reading the Good Book. Even more than that, it has come about because of a recognition of Who Jesus Christ is, and most importantly, of how He and that recognition, illumines each of my days.

He is the Way - Jesus Christ showed us the ultimate of what True Love entails; no exemptions just because you happen to be a god. And I realized that I probably wouldn't be following someone who would let himself "off the hook." But He is the Way in other ways too. He said help others and serve the poor; love others. That is the Way. A simple way to prove it is to imagine someone who says follow me by serving yourself first. Then really, who is first then?

He is the Truth - The Truth, takes some time to digest; for what does Truth mean? One way to look at it is the absence of lies. So much of life gets complicated quickly because of lies and half-truths. Once started, the untruths and the complications seem to always compound. The Truth that Jesus is God, once you firmly believe it, has the power to make lives simpler and better.

Often we expect the world to revolve around us. Once on a radio show, I hear a caller say that once she recognized that there was something bigger in this world than herself, aka – God, then the miseries of self-focus disappeared and she found true peace and happiness. The Truth has that Power.

He is the Life - This, to me is the clincher. Once I thought that the phrase "I'm good" summarized where I was in my life. GOOD encompassed keeping to myself, not consciously hurting others, and going to church on Sundays. Still, I wound up drowning from disappointments of myself.

But there really is BETTER; there is BEST. We discover these when we let Jesus into our lives, because that is exactly what He brings – Life to the fullest.

Not that everything is easy from there on... But having Christ does mean that nothing in the uncertain future has to be faced alone. Jesus will be there and ultimately, with Him, there will be LIFE.

Yes, I absolutely agree! This is the most important verse in the Bible:

***"I am the way and the truth
and the life."***

COUNSELS *(continued from page 1)*

We had just experienced love and mercy first hand this past Lenten season, and God has never forgotten His mercy. Centuries after He promised to bless all nations, He sent His Son into the world, the embodiment of God's desire to bring us into a new covenant; Jesus showed us God's mercy when He offered Himself for us on the cross. This sacrifice of His life for us is the culmination of all the individual merciful acts that He had performed. It can be hard to grasp, but Jesus' cross has opened heaven's gates and made it possible for us to know God's love deeply and personally. It is His sacrifice that helps us become more loving, merciful and compassionate.

So follow the great I AM..... LOVE ONE ANOTHER!

This may sound like a tall order. While it may seem easy to obey this command within the boundaries of our comfort zones, especially among our family, friends and loved ones, it becomes a challenge when we are to live up to the commandment in the outside world.

Last April, Pope Francis announced an Extraordinary Jubilee Year dedicated to the mercy of God. He repeatedly emphasized that mercy is a chief characteristic of God, a key aspect in the ministry of Jesus, the central foundation in the Church's mission: to be instruments of mercy. He asked us to reach out and help the needy, feel for the poor, sick and marginalized. How can we advance the mission of the Church as we come to faith through the power of the Holy Spirit?

The next time you are in Divine Mercy Church, take some time to shift your minds and look at the Church's corridors and walls. Pay particular attention to the small banners hanging from the pillars. They are illustrations of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. These offer us a perfect opportunity for us to rediscover the merciful face of our Father.

Works of Mercy - charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbors in their spiritual and physical necessities - what a wonderful way for us to love our neighbor.

Let us step back and slow down a bit. It is time to seek the Lord and reflect on how we can be more compassionate, and thus, fulfill His command to love one another.

We may not feel as talented as St Paul but it is not hard for us to speak encouraging words to a friend. It is not hard for us to offer a prayer for a neighbor or relative facing a medical crisis. It is not impossible to forgive a coworker who has hurt us. Sometimes it means going beyond our parish boundaries so we can draw more people. We are a Church on a mission.

Let us ask Jesus to break down the dividing walls that separate us so we can be more merciful and loving to our brethren. May every relationship - the good, as well as the struggling - be touched by God's mercy and love.

Lord, may we show Your love to everyone we meet simply because we are all Your children, *Continued on page 4*

NEWS

(continued from page 1)

in marriage and family. Chapter five then challenges the reader to look at his or her own attitudes on pregnancy, children, parents and the elderly.

Pope Francis follows his expositions on love with some pastoral perspectives. In chapter six, he puts forth general recommendations for the formation of priests, religious, laity and seminarians in matters of family. He also affirms the Church's teaching on same-sex attraction: calling for respect for the dignity of those who have this attraction, condemning any unjust discrimination against these persons, and recognizing that same-sex unions cannot be placed at the same level as marriage. He next turns his attention to the education of children, including sex education, in chapter seven. In particular, he points out that the moral formation of children can never completely be delegated to others. It always remains primarily the duty of the parents.

Chapter eight outlines the Church's approach to those who participate in her life in an incomplete manner: accompanying, discerning, and integrating weakness. Pope Francis rejects the "casting off" of those in "irregular" situations. Instead, he opts always for "reinstatement." Throughout the chapter, he echoes the pastoral recommendations put forth by the synods in terms of, for example, the separated and divorced and the divorced and civilly remarried. He says of these people, "Hence it can no longer simply be said that all those in any 'irregular' situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace (par 301). Could the Church's minister, therefore, not help such people, in the privacy of the rectory parlor or the confessional, to discern their degree of moral responsibility?"

The exhortation closes with a consideration of the spirituality of marriage and family. Pope Francis grounds this spirituality in the communion of the Holy Trinity; Easter; and freedom, care, consolation and incentive. He leaves us with this reminder, "no family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love."

SIDEBAR: THE SPIRIT OF ST. IGNATIUS

Amoris Laetitia offers the reader a tremendous amount of content to reflect upon. In fact, reading the exhortation could qualify as entering into spiritual direction. In all, the exhortation seems to be the direct fruit of the pope's Jesuit formation.

COUNSELS

(continued from page 3)

and all are equally important and loved by You. May we all commit to building the Church, confident that You are with us, sustaining us at every step. Let us not become a community that bears no fruit, but rather, a community of friendship and love, trusting that You, *the One Who sat on the throne will make all things new* (Rev 21:5).

LORD'S PROVISION

PREVIOUS WEEK'S

Collections	Prior Week	YTD
Tithe & Love Offering	\$ 3,251	\$ 38,821
Mission Collections	\$ 49	\$ 3,605

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

Thank you for your continued support!

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

A BLD MUST-ATTEND EVENT!!!

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION - FIRST FRIDAY

May 6, 2016 - 8:30 PM - Divine Mercy Parish
 Main Celebrant: **ARCHBISHOP BERNARDITO AUZA**
 - Papal Nuncio & Permanent Observer
 of the Holy See (Vatican) to the United Nations
Archbishop Barney Auza was hand-picked by Pope Francis to be his Papal Nuncio to the United Nations. He is the first ever Filipino to hold this important Vatican office.
 ALL ARE WELCOME!!!

Disciples' Assembly Saturday, April 23, 2016

Marriage Encounter # 47

June 17-19, 2016 Hotel Executive Suites
 30 Minue St, Carteret, NJ 07008
 Contact: Efren.Cruz@bldnewark.com

Solo Parents Encounter #18

June 24-26, 2016
 Days Hotel Conference
 Center East Brunswick
 195 Route 18 South, East
 Brunswick, NJ 08816

Singles Encounter #36

June 24-26, 2016
 Graymoor Spiritual Life Center
 Garrison, NY 10524
 Note change in date

Youth Encounter #22

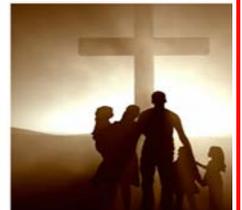
"Come and Follow Me..."
 Please contact: Charlie & Weng Larobis
 July 8-10, 2016 Ron & Dina Pangilinan
 Pine Hill, PA (TBC) Oliver & Marissa Rangel

FAMILY ENCOUNTER 23

When: July 15, 16, 17, 2016
 Where: Malvern Retreat House
 Malvern, PA

Submit Applications to:

Mat & Precy Yap (973) 769-1426
 June & Edith Buhain (973) 342-3276
 Butch & Malou Morales
 (908) 477-5125



TEACHING CALENDAR

Teachings for **Saturday, May 21 - 1 to 6 pm:**

- Apologetics (LSS 1-42)
- New Creation Realities (LSS 1-46; Singles)
- Growth in Prayer
- Gifts & Fruits of the Holy Spirit (LSS 1-45)

Marshaling		Schedule	Date	Apostolate
			Apr 29	Formation
			May 6	Management
			May 13	Mission
May 20	Pastoral			

Please notify Word Ministry if you have not been receiving your soft copies by emailing: word@bldnewark.com