

From The Pastor's Desk

Today, I was blessed by the Lord to have the nerve ablation on my back that had been postponed for over one month now. Although it has only been a few hours since the procedure (it is currently mid-afternoon on Thursday), I feel very well and I have a feeling that it will be successful. Of course, it takes six weeks to feel the full effects of this intervention, but I am very hopeful, and I can say to date that my hope in God has always been well placed. For now, the numbing agent is still managing my pain; however, I remain fully confident that the long-term effects will be most promising. God has been so very good to me over these last nine months, and I fully believe in God's consistency. Praise Him from whom all blessings flow! I ask for your prayers regarding the gout that I am still enduring because of my anti-rejection medication. It is especially painful in my hands and feet during this current flare up that has been occurring during the last three weeks. To be honest, at times it has been difficult for me to walk. The good news is we are awaiting approval from the insurance company for a new medication that should bring me much relief. I ask that you join your prayers with mine for both a speedy resolution to the insurance issue and for continued patience on my part. God will provide. God always does.

This week as I have been at prayer, the Lord has been drawing my attention to the eighth commandment (following Saint Augustine and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, hereafter CCC): "Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor." The CCC states in paragraph 2464: "The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others. This moral prescription flows from the vocation of the holy people to bear witness to their God who is the truth and wills the truth. Offenses against the truth express by word or deed a refusal to commit oneself to moral uprightness: they are fundamental infidelities to God and, in this sense, they undermine the foundations of the covenant." What this means in essence is that the truth must be communicated to those who have a right to it. It also means that a lie is a lie. There are no varieties (e.g., the "little white lie" does not exist). Also, obvious lies are not the only actions that violate the eighth commandment: injuring the reputation of another, perjury, detraction, calumny, and gossip are all offenses against truth and are all considered unjust. Gossip, which is often a severe form of detraction (disclosure of another's faults or failings, [true or untrue]) undeniably deadly. Pope Francis has likened it spiritual terrorism, which in my informed theological evaluation makes it intrinsically evil. Therefore, truth is sacred. Speech is sacred, Communication is sacred – both personal and virtual. We

can never forget this for remember Jesus self-identified as “truth” (cf. John 14:6). If we have no regard for truth, we really have little regard for Jesus Christ, himself. Therefore, I enjoin all who read this piece (including me), we must take all of our communication seriously: at the proverbial “watercooler,” in the back of the Church, over the telephone, at our communal meals and gatherings, in our emails and our texting with our Facebook “friends,” in our casual and professional statements...whatever the situation, whatever the means personal honesty and integrity is key. The litmus test for every communication /conversation should be to determine whether we would we communicate the way that we do if the Lord were physically present to the exchange. As I recall, this Lent we are striving for greater intimacy with Christ. In order to show our real selves to Christ we must speak the truth about ourselves and those with whom we are in relationship. My prayer will continue to be that we continually recall that the gift of the exchange of information is holy, at any time, in any way, by any means, and with anyone.

Our Church Environment: DECORATING FOR HOLY WEEK

We are very proud of the manner in which the decoration of our Church reflects the ethos of the liturgical season which we are celebrating. We have a very dedicated group of volunteers for whom we are very grateful; however, we are always looking for new faces to join us. If you would like to be part of the important ministry of decorating for Holy Week/The Sacred Triduum/Easter, you would be most welcome and we in turn would be most thankful to have you. The schedule for decorating is as follows:

Saturday 4/12 – 9:00 AM (for Passion/Palm Sunday)

Thursday 4/17 – 3:30 PM (For Holy Thursday – the Lord’s Supper)

****The sanctuary will be stripped immediately following the celebration of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday evening*

Saturday 4/19 – 9:00 AM (for the Easter Vigil/Easter Sunday)

Save the Date: As you may recall, the diocese is planning a pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on October 17, 2025. There will be two buses traveling from the Johnstown Area which will be organized by Visitation Parish. Registrations are being deferred until the late summer until all details are finalized. Please consider joining us for this pilgrimage, which is both an extraordinary experience (I lived across the street from the shrine for almost four years, which was a true gift) and another opportunity to gain a plenary indulgence.

Saint Peregrine Triduum: May 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, 2025

The Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary will celebrate its Annual Triduum in honor of St. Peregrine on Thurs. May 1, Fri. May 2, and Sat. May 3.

St. Peregrine is known as the patron saint of cancer patients, AIDS victims and others suffering from serious illnesses. These two prayers give us an intriguing glimpse into his life's story. Peregrine Laziosi was born in 1260 in Forli, Italy to a wealthy family. Although he was a member of an anti-papal party as a young man, he experienced a profound change of heart, much like St. Paul's conversion in its intensity.

He and some companions showed up one day to heckle and otherwise abuse St. Philip Benizi, the Prior General of the Servants of Mary, who was preaching in Forli. Peregrine went so far as to strike him in the face! St. Philip, seemingly following our Lord's advice in scripture (Matt 5:39, Luke 6:29), offered his other cheek in response. This gesture so moved Peregrine that he quickly asked for Philip's forgiveness and soon thereafter converted to Catholicism, spending much time in prayer at the Chapel of Our Lady at the Cathedral. Mary appeared to him there in a vision asking him to join the Servite Order in Siena. He was received there by St. Philip! Peregrine spent the rest of his life ministering to the poor and the sick, mainly in his hometown of Forli where he established a new house for the Servites. His dedication to the faith was such that, according to tradition, he would stand constantly instead of sitting down, as a form of penance.

He underwent a severe trial when he developed a cancerous sore on his leg (as we see in depictions of him such as the one below) as well as his feet. Doctors decided upon amputation as treatment. The night before the operation, Peregrine spent the night in prayer before a crucifix in a hospital chapel. He dreamt at one point there that Christ came down from the cross and healed his leg. When he woke up, he and his doctor made the discovery that he was completely cured. God had truly performed a miracle on this holy man!

Peregrine himself performed numerous miracles in his life. After his death in 1345, there were countless others, especially in Spain. The Church attributed to him more than 300 cures of cancer and other illnesses from 1694 to 1726 in one city there alone!

Please consider joining us for our celebration of this important triduum invoking this powerful patron. The schedule for the triduum is as follows:

May, 1st – 7:00 PM Opening Mass with Novena Prayers

*May 2nd – 12:00 Noon -3:00 PM Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
7:00 PM Healing Mass (Anointing of the Sick during Mass)
and Novena Prayers*

*May 3rd – 4:00 PM Closing Mass with Novena Prayers
Hors D Oeuvres Reception immediately following Mass
(all are welcome)*



**Next week a form will be available in the bulletin to submit your prayer intentions for the Triduum (including requests to light candles).*