

**St. Joan of Arc – Parish Retreat
September 18-20, 2005
Hershey, PA.**

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Happy 85th Anniversary. You were born in the summer of 1920 and named after St. Joan of Arc. The Maid of Orleans had just been canonized a saint by Pope Benedict XV on May 16, 1920. When she became patroness of the new parish in Hershey, it was but the third parish in the nation so honored.

In 1920 Woodrow Wilson was President of the United States. Born that same year was Jack Webb the actor, Ravi Shankar the Sitar Player and father of Norah Jones, “Sugar” Ray Robinson the Boxer, Peggy Lee the Singer and Walter Matthau the Actor.

Here are some of the headlines in the news that year:

- *The 19th Amendment is ratified, giving women the right to vote.*
- *The “Red Scare” results in nationwide raids, with mass arrests of anarchists, Communists, and labor agitators.*
- *KDKA, America’s first commercial radio station, begins operations in Pittsburg.*
- *Silent screen stars Douglas Fairbanks & Mary Pickford married.*
- *Coca-Cola sales exceeded \$4 million that year.*

In 1920, a bottle of Coca-Cola cost .5 cents. An electric iron was \$5.25. Life expectancy was 53.6 years for men and 54.7 for women. An annual salary was \$1236.00. It took 13 days to travel from New York City to Los Angeles.

Eugene O’Neill won the Pulitzer in Drama for *Beyond the Horizon*. President Wilson received the Nobel Peace Prize. In Entertainment, Al Jolson’s *Swanee* and Paul Whiteman’s *Whispering* were musical hits. And Agatha Christie introduced the Belgian Sleuth Hercule Poirot in the *Mysterious Affair of Styles*.

In Sports, The Chicago Grand Jury indicts 8 members of the Chicago White Sox for fixing the 1919 World Series against the Cincinnati Reds. They are found not guilty, but are not allowed to play baseball again.

- *Water skiing as a sport is developed on Lake Annecy, France.*

- *Olympic Games were held in Antwerp, Belgium.*
- *Bill Tilden won his first of seven US Open Tennis titles.*
- *The Cleveland Indians beat the Brooklyn Dodgers 5 games to 2 in the World Series.*
- *Paul Jones won the Kentucky Derby.*
- *The Ottawa Senators won the Stanley Cup. 85 years later, after the cancellation of an entire Hockey season, a new generation is asking what is the NHL?*

All of the above is compliments of *Google.com*

Apart from this national news you were making local news. The problems of your struggling congregation, shifting from one worship site to another, was brought to the attention of Mr. Milton Hershey and on August 9, 1920 he personally opened an account for the parish in the amount of \$2,000.00 to aid in building a new church. This enabled plans to proceed for the erection of the stone building on Chocolate Avenue. Ground was broken on Sunday August 15, 1920. Priests and laity were present from Lancaster, York, Lebanon, Chambersburg, Elizabethtown, Carlisle and Harrisburg.

In 1935, at the darkest hour of the depression, the church debt was cancelled thanks to a gift of \$20,000.00 by Mr. Hershey.

On May 30, 1948 (*Feast of St. Joan of Arc*), the cornerstone was laid and blessed for the new school and hall built during the pastorate of Father Anthony Mayan.

- *On Sept. 1st nine Sisters, Daughters of Our Lady of Mercy began classes for 220 students.*
- *Two years later on March 25, 1950 Fr. John Aurentz, the first priestly vocation from the parish, was ordained.*
- *Eleven years later on Oct. 15, 1961 Rev. William Hopkins was the first graduate of the Milton Hershey School to be ordained.*
- *On Feb. 4, 1962 a new church was completed. Four months later, in more than a symbolic gesture you gave the stone Church to the community of Hershey.*

- ***On May 16, 1964, a third parishioner, Sylvan Capitani, was ordained to the priesthood at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Harrisburg.***
- ***During this growth and expansion, an experience called "Vatican II" was happening in Rome (1962-1965). As you adapted to changes in sacramental celebrations and began participating in renewed church structures, you were trying on the conciliar definition of Church as "the people of God" to make sure it fit St. Joan of Arc Parish.***

I am Father Paul Mast of the Diocese of Wilmington, DE. I am a native of the State of "Tax Free Shopping." *Governor Minner asked me to say "thank you" whenever you shop there.* I have been invited by your pastor to lead you in a parish retreat in your 85th year of Catholic life in Hershey, PA. I was happy to accept for two reasons: (1) as a little boy my family traveled to Hershey Park every summer until I was 16 years. (2) I am a certified chocoholic. Coming to Hershey for me is like coming to Heaven.

The retreat is celebrating your patron saint – Joan of Arc – among a *Cloud of Witnesses*.

- ***Sunday "Faith in her story as a saint." We will reflect on the stories of two biblical women, Ruth and Elizabeth. Their lives parallel the life of Joan of Arc making all three Pro-Life women.***
- ***Monday "Hope in her story as a sinner." We will reflect on the stories of two other biblical women, Judith and Mary Magdalene whose lives are similar to Joan's. All three were given a mission to help sinners become evangelists. The Monday retreat service will include a Communal Penance service with individual reconciliation.***
- ***Tuesday "God in her story as a victim." Scripture readings from Daniel 13 and John 19 tell stories of two other women (Suzanna & Mary of Nazareth) who, like Joan of Arc, became victims. The closing liturgy which will also be the closing of your parish 40 Hours will be a celebration of the Eucharist in which we "see the victim whose death has reconciled us to himself."***

The story of your patron saint is an inspiring one. In the 15th century a teenage girl hears "voices" in her prayers, calling her to lead the armies of France against the English invaders. Her visions and voices also directed her to have Charles VII crowned King of France. She could never read nor write, but commanded an army. She was unschooled in warfare, but had a military genius that embarrassed the French and English generals. Captured by the English, a Church court condemned her, and at the age of 19, she was burned at the stake as a heretic in the city of Rouen on May 30,

1431. Twenty-five years later she was pronounced innocent of the charges. 464 years later she is canonized.

The theme of *vision and voices* in her story as a saint is woven into your story as a Catholic parish. Certain people in your 85-year history had vision and gave voice to your birth, your infancy, your adolescence, your mid-life, your second birth through Vatican II and now.....what is God's vision for you and whose voices will bring it to life as you begin a 15 year journey to your 100th birthday in 2020?

The scripture lessons today suggest that Isaiah should be one of the voices. When he speaks his words are resounding imperatives: *"seek the Lord!"* and *"call him."* He means more than visiting a sanctuary to resolve a problem. His words mean a humble confession of sins, an invitation to abandon a sinful way of life. Unlike man, God will forgive. Then comes the voice of God, *"my ways are different, as heaven is different from earth."* Yet, the seeking and calling must be done if we are to share the generous mercy of God.

St. Paul should also be one of the voices. In his letter to the Philippians he sounds conflicted. He writes while in prison at Ephesus and the possibility of a death sentence is very real. As he faces that honestly he names Christ as all the matters in his life as an apostle, preacher and pastor. The final word of his imprisonment was life, not death.

Finally, Jesus should also be one of the voices. In the Parable of the Owner of the Vineyard Jesus teaches a Parable about God. God is free to do as He pleases with his gifts. And he is generous, especially toward those who are complained about by others.

Over the next three days we will celebrate that divine generosity in the gift of your parish saint, the sacrament of reconciliation which she so often celebrated, and the gift of the Eucharist which she hungered for daily. My prayer is that the voice of her holiness, the voice of forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance and the voice of love in the Eucharist will be all the voices you need to give vision to the unfolding of heaven on earth. That will happen in the new ways you find to live the gospel of life here in Hershey as you journey toward the 100th year of giving witness and celebrating the wonders of Catholic life and faith. Amen.