



## WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

How often do you fill the gas tank in your car? Do you have a set routine? Do you fill it every time it gets to half full, after a set number of days, or do you wait until the warning light comes on? Regardless of our custom, we have to get gas regularly, or we will run out of gas. That happened to me, only once. I was a new driver, using the family car, and didn't think anything about it. Fortunately, I wasn't far from home, and I learned my lesson!

It's a common and easy analogy to think of our souls like a gas tank, that needs to be filled regularly. Just as we use gas by driving around, we lose spiritual energy just by living. The normal stresses and challenges of everyday life, but especially our sins, drain our souls. If we don't replenish ourselves spiritually, we become spiritually dry, empty, weak, confused, lost and stuck. We become an embodiment of that Jackson Browne song, *Running on Empty*, used in the film *Forrest Gump*, when he was running across country.

This week we celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, in which we proclaim that Mary, by the gift of Christ's redemption, is freed from Original Sin. This is a unique gift granted her, from the moment of her conception. For us, that gift is only received later, beginning in Baptism. This truth is announced when the angel appeared to Mary to ask her to bear the Son of God. In Gabriel's greeting at the Annunciation, he states:

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28)

Along with honoring Mary's role in our salvation, we can also reflect upon our call to be as full of grace as we possibly can! Returning to our gas tank analogy, we can ask ourselves how often we fill our spiritual tank. It is pretty difficult to have a full tank of spiritual gas if we are not going to Mass weekly, receiving Communion, praying, going to Confession, and actively seeking ways to grow in faith and in our relationship with God. If we keep passing the gas station, eventually we'll run out of gas.

I also remember my dad reminding us that we shouldn't let a tank get close to empty. When we do that, he warned, we can bring up any sediment in the tank, which could clog the gas line. In our spiritual lives, it is not good practice, to run ourselves spiritually into the ground, piling sin upon sin, waiting till the last minute, to go to the spiritual gas station, the Church. For our cars, we can let junk into our gas lines, but generally, once we fill up we're good to go. Not with our souls. Of course, God in His mercy, will always help us, but as human beings, it takes more time to spiritually recoup what was lost and get back on track. Just like a car, it makes sense to fill up regularly, and not wait till the last minute!

**"For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery."**  
**(Galatians 5:1)**