

CLOSING PRAYER:

A PRAYER FOR A CLEAN HEART

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit
within me.

Create in me a clean heart,
open and receptive,
so that I may embrace
the many ways you choose
to visit my life.

Create in me a clean heart,
cleared of the refuse
of old battles with others
and deadly opposition with myself.

Create in me a clean heart,
purified through the daily disruptions
and the life encounters
that take me
beyond my grasping control
and ego-centeredness.

Create in me a clean heart,
freed from the clutter
of cultural enticements,
so that I can enjoy the beauty
of life's simple things
and relish the gifts
I so easily take for granted.

Create in me a clean heart,
bathed from harsh thoughts,
shame, and perfectionist tendencies,
warmly welcoming others
with the embrace of non-judgment.

Create in me a clean heart,
brushed free of frantic busyness,
so that I will have time
to dwell with you
in the listening space
of solitude
and silence.

Create in me a clean heart,
rinsed of the residue
of false messages
about my identity,
enabling my inner goodness and light
to shine through all I am and do.

Create in me a clean heart,
cleansed of anxiety and lack of trust,
restoring in me an enduring faith
in your abiding presence
and unconditional love.

Create in me a clean heart,
scrubbed of racism and prejudice,
drawing me toward all
as my sisters and brothers.

Create in me a clean heart,
washed with your mercy
and strengthened by your love,
helping me to move beyond
whatever keeps me from union with you.

Create a clean heart in me, God.
Dust off the unmindful activity
that constantly collects there.

De-clutter my heart
from harsh judgments and negativity.

Wash away my resistance
to working through difficult relationships.

Rinse off my unloving
so the beauty of my generous
and kind heart
can shine forth.

Remove whatever keeps me
from following
in your compassionate footsteps.
Amen.

—Joyce Rupp

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.
phone: [440] 473-3560. e-mail: jbcsc@ix.netcom.com

Our Lady Chapel



Our Lady Chapel is a Roman Catholic community founded in the love of the Father, centered in Christ, and rooted in the Holy Cross tenets of building family and embracing diversity. We are united in our journey of faith through prayer and sacrament, and we seek growth through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in liturgy and outreach, while responding to the needs of humanity.

WELCOME TETÉLESTAI:

We are privileged this weekend to host the Pasion Play, **Tetelestai**. There is still time for you to see it — **Saturday, March 12th at 8:00 PM** and on **Sunday, March 13th at 2:00 PM**. Depicting the final week of Jesus' life, **Tetelestai** brings us right into the events surrounding the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is a marvelous spiritual opportunity for you and your family. The children will love the story telling of Jesus, the scene of the prophets, Jesus with his apostles and the holy women, the upper room, and of course, the resurrection. During the presentation, the cast moves throughout the audience, bringing them into the scenes. I really want to encourage you and your family to take advantage of this spiritual offering. There is no charge for admission. A free-will offering is taken as you exit if you would like to contribute. Each presentation will be followed by an informal reception in the Commons when you will be able to mingle with the cast. Please join us.

**PENANCE SERVICE:**

Our community celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be held this **Monday, March 21st at 7:00 PM**. Our service is centered around reflections by the various characters involved in the passion and death of Jesus. There will also be songs and hymns, and a time to bring ourselves from our sinful ways back to the Lord. As we confront our own sinfulness, we realize that we, too, have a part to play in the death of Jesus. The service will last about 45 minutes. There will be a time for individual confessions following the service, for those who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity. Please join us.

**PROVIDE A RIDE:**

Volunteers needed to provide rides "to and from" Mass for members of Our Lady Chapel — both Saturday Evening Mass at 5 PM and Sunday Mass at 10 AM. **This ministry will involve only providing rides to the Chapel for Mass.** Volunteers must be 21 or older. Please provide your name and phone number so that we can form a call list. We have a growing need in the chapel and would like to provide this service to our members. **Contact Tina Newton at 440-991-6670**

**YOUTH — BE A PART OF OUR GOOD FRIDAY PASSION:**

One of the big traditions at Our Lady Chapel is the presentation of **Live Stations of the Cross** on **Good Friday**. Presented by our Young People [K-College], we pause on this most sacred day to contemplate the Passion and Death of Jesus through reflection, song, and dramatic presentation. As in years past, we would like to invite all students K-College to sign up for this very unique prayer service. We need readers, singers, instrumentalists and actors — no experiences are needed. It's a great experience to be with Jesus during his last journey to Calvary. If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact **Patty** or **Father John** in Our Chapel Office **440-473-3560**, or **sign up on the Easel**.

**EXPANDING OUR VISION:**

When you live a life of giving and helping others, you are sowing into the Kingdom — the very Universe. Those seeds will rise up throughout your life and years after you are gone, touching the lives of your legacy; your bloodline will run strong. Your life is your life, but you will truly be rewarded when you give pieces of your life away. Help someone today, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year. When you do, you are truly helping yourself.

—Janice Harris

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Kiara Pikin-de-Bruin who is recovering from heart surgery.
- For Heidi Herten, mother of Hope ['13] and James ['15] Herten, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Carmella DeJohn who is seriously ill.
- For Tony Stricker who is undergoing treatment for a brain condition.
- For Paula Minello, mother of Annalise ['16] and Sophia ['19] who is recovering from surgery.
- For Ramon Ortega, who is critically ill following heart surgery.
- For Karen Bernardo who is recovering from serious heart surgery.
- For Bonnie O'Leary, Middle School Teacher, who is undergoing rehab following surgery.
- For Eva Shea, aunt of lower school teacher, Theresa Stark, who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer
- For Kathy Hronek who is recovering from cancer surgery.
- For Joseph Frantz ['75], brother of Mark ['65], David ['66], Roger ['69], and Peter ['78] Frantz, who is seriously ill.
- For Ann Ally, mother of former Gilmour teacher Deshia Joseph, who is under the care of hospice.
- For Richard Kopitke, friend of Judy Morgan, who is healing from injuries sustained in a fall and from surgery.
- For Ed Carrigan, uncle of LS teacher, Theresa Stark, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Kate Wilson, Niece of Brother Ken Kane, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Justin Tarr who is critically ill with brain cancer.
- For Jim Spicer who is undergoing treatment for brain and lung cancer.
- For John O'Brian who has been diagnosed with a serious form of cancer.
- For Bill Slattery ['77] who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For John Burkey, uncle of religion instructor, Rachel Burkey, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Annie Trivassos who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Nicholas Zanella, who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Jan Botek, wife of Fred, mother of Fred ['85], grandmother of Matthew ['14], Jonathan ['17] and Daniel ['21] Botek, who is undergoing treatment for dementia.
- For Teddy Prusock, nephew of Lower School associate, Nina Prusock, who is undergoing neurological testing.

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR:

For the past year, our teens have been volunteering at **Our Savior Lutheran Church Food Pantry** [located right across the street from the chapel]. The Pantry is open on the **third Saturday of every month from 11:00 AM – 1:30 or 2:00 PM**. Our Savior Lutheran's Food Pantry was formed to serve those in emergency situations and/or with on-going need in the cities of Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Highland Heights and Gates Mills. The Food Pantry respects social and cultural diversity and upholds the worth and dignity of those it serves. All those in the area with need will be served equally, as supplies allow. The food pantry is a member of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. During the course of the past year, the food pantry at Our Savior Lutheran Church served an average of 141 households each time. Our teens have loved this ministry and have been very faithful to it. **We would now like to open this ministry up to our entire Chapel Community. If you would like to help on any given third Saturday, please call Patty at the chapel office [440-473-3560] to let us know that you are going to volunteer, or email Elina Gurney at gurney.oh@gmail.com.** Come as a family or by yourself.

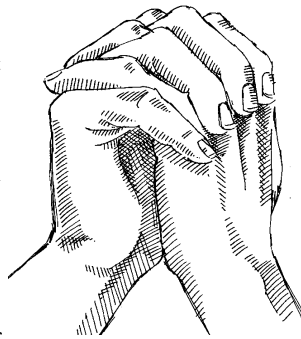


PRAYER REQUESTS:

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Rose Wedeward, grandmother of Cassie [*17], Frank [*18], and Mia [*19] Nannicola, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Debbie Torrijas, sister of Brother Christopher Torrijas, C.S.C., who is seriously ill.
- For Brother Robert Kelly, C.S.C., who is recovering from injuries sustained in a fall.
- For David Frazier who is seriously ill with a heart condition.
- For Donna Polack, wife of Bill, who is recovering from hip replacement surgery.
- For John Heidrich who is critically ill following multiple heart attacks.
- For Elaine Willey, sister of Father John, who are undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Stephen Ungrady, father of Emily [*19], who is recovering from a stroke
- For Christina Parrilla, sister of Brother Carlos Parrilla, C.S.C., who is recovering from kidney transplant surgery
- For Jim Virant, grandfather of Noah Virant [*20], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Todd King [*87], brother of Christie [*91] King, who is undergoing treatment for miroconda
- For John DiCillo, husband of long-time Gilmour teacher, Bonnie, father of John [*83], David [*84], Dawn [*86] and Daniel [*88] DiCillo, who is seriously ill with lymphoma.
- For Jenny Blender, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Dorothy Kazel, mother of Daniel [*86] and Gilmour counselor, Jamie, who is undergoing treatment for cancer..
- For Mark LaCasse, brother of Upper School Associate, Linda Wheeler, uncle of Molly [*06] Wheeler, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Sue Nyberg, godmother of Katie Leavitt, who is seriously ill with cancer.
- For Drew Franco, son of Brian [*90], nephew of Jeff [*88] and Kristin [*94] Kirkpatrick, who is struggling with a seizure disorder.
- For Michael Palumbo, father of Michael [*14], Marisa [*15], and former Gilmour student, Christian, who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Colleen Lowman, grandmother of Religion instructor, Rachel Burkey, who is seriously ill.
- For Dennis Kavran, father of Dennis [*86] and Jennifer [*95], grandfather of Adam [*14] and Madeleine [*16] Miller, who is undergoing further treatment for cancer.
- For Donna Farkas who is hospitalized with an infection.
- For Lexi Pappadakes, who is undergoing treatment for complications from surgery..
- For Rosemarie Lemieux who is ill.
- For Matt Barry [*13], brother of Tim [*12], who continues treatment for cancer.
- For Maria Ricci, friend of Linda McGraw, who is ill.
- For Jeff Warner, brother of Denise Calabrese, who is undergoing treatment resulting from a stroke and seizure.
- For Janice Feenstra, sister of Lisa Habe, aunt of Jack [*19] and Will [*20] Habe who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Karen Wanders, mother of upper school Head of School, Jonathan Wanders, who continues in treatment and rehabilitation
- For Betty Herten, aunt of Hope [*13] and James [*15] Herten, who is undergoing treatment for leukemia.



FAITH EDUCATION — MARCH 13:

Faith Education for this year continues. Our Sessions go from **8:45—9:45 AM**, with the hope that our children would then **participate in our 10:00 AM Family Mass. Register your family for classes by contacting Patty in the Chapel Office [[440-473-3560].** If you have any questions, please call Patty in the chapel office. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility. **Dates for March and April: March 13 and April 10 -17-24.**



SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, March 13: 5th Week in Lent	10:00 AM
Monday, March 14:	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Tuesday, March 15:	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Wednesday, March 16:	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Thursday, March 17: St. Patrick	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Friday, March 18:	5:30 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Saturday, March 19: Palm Sunday Weekend	5:00 PM
Sunday, March 20: Palm Sunday Weekend	10:00 AM

UPCOMING CHAPEL ACTIVITIES:

March 15 -----	Junior Vocation Panel OLC Council Meeting	1:00 PM 6:15 PM
March 17 -----	Honduras Mission Trip Departs Sophomore Religion Mass Sophomore Religion Mass Sophomore Religion Mass	3:00 AM 8:15 AM 12:00 noon 2:00 PM
March 19 -----	Palm Sunday Vigil Mass	5:00 PM
March 20 -----	Palm Sunday Mass	10:00 AM
March 21 -----	Chapel Community Penance Service	7:00 PM
March 24 -----	Mass of the Lord's Supper	7:00 PM
March 25 -----	Simple Lunch Living Stations of the Cross Good Friday Liturgy	12:30 PM 1:30 PM 3:00 PM

REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

Someone once wrote a poem in which it is stated that God made whole numbers, while humans made and love fractions. These breakings seem to give us a sense of depth and control of the small things. Our fractions — or breakings or break-ups — can be painful, and a sense of our losing control of even the small things. As we journey through this Lenten season, we ask God to put our pieces back together. We ask for the grace of simplicity which allows us to bring our whole, yet broken selves to be blest and put together for holy distributings.

The prophet Isaiah calls us to a new wholeness. The people of Israel are now in captivity in Babylon. Through the prophet, God reminds the Israelites about what he has done in the past — recall the “First Exodus”. What is interesting here is that the Prophet is speaking of events of the past, but he is speaking in the present tense — God is bringing to their minds the truth that while in their minds, these events are in their past, but they are present in the eyes of God. They are in exile from their homeland and the “Second Exodus” will be even greater as an identifying claim that the nation is even more God’s Chosen.

What God is saying here is that the “first display of my power was nothing — you ain’t seen nothing yet!” In the First Exodus the waters were split so that a safe passage would be allowed. Now the opposite will take place. Where there is no water in the desert, there will be rivers and a way back home. As in the “First Exodus” the object of freedom is so that they might understand that “God is their God”, and that they need to respond to this by singing God’s praise and serving their loving God.

God is not to be forgotten by the Jews — he is part of their saving history. This “second Exodus” is not a replacement of the first, but an intensification of that saving love. The wild beasts will praise the creating God for their new life in the desert of fertility. The people of God are called to that same sense of grateful relating to their God of creation and salvation.

John’s Gospel story is a “something-new” event as well [John 8:1-11]. Jesus is in the temple area, and the crowds come to hear His teachings. John’s whole Gospel is a presenting of Jesus as a replacement of the temple which the Romans destroyed long after the death and resurrection of Jesus. So the setting of this story is significant, and so is His teaching through this saving event.

The Pharisees and the scribes bring to Jesus a woman caught in adultery. It is a court scene, and Jesus — not the woman — is on trial. The issue here is whether Jesus is of the “old” order — the “First Exodus” — or of something “new” — the “Second Exodus”. The trial begins. The Law of Moses is the evidence presented by the Pharisees, and the new evidence which Jesus provides is what creates the tension. If Jesus condemns her then He is of the “old”, and they win and remain the religious center for the people. If Jesus violates the Law and does something new and different, then Jesus is not only opposed to the Law, but to their being at the center.

But there is more going on here. It is significant for John’s theology that Jesus arrives at the temple early in the morning at daybreak. For Jesus presents himself as the “Light of the world”. The creation story begins again. This whole chapter is a discussion with the Jewish leaders about just who Jesus is. As “Light” Jesus desires to illumine their minds and hearts.

The woman is a set-up person — the Pharisees use her for their purposes as did the man who used her sexually. Jesus frees her from the captivity of the crowd, the Pharisees, and the Law. The tension of the courtroom is resolved by Jesus’ inviting her fellow-sinners to keep the Law by stoning her if they are without sin. Nobody is left to throw stones cleanly. Jesus missions her to live as loved, not used any

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Tom Campbell.
- For Josephine Rosaletti, mother-in-law of Norma Rosaletti [anniversary]
- For Rego Giovanetti.
- For Gerald DeChant
- For Mario Frate.
- For Father Steve Kaminski, pastor of St. Mary Magdalene [Willowick]
- For Nadya Zitek, sister of former Gilmour associate, Natalie Zitek.
- For Jean Helfrich, mother of Gilmour Trustee, Thomas, grandmother of Sarah [‘02] Helfrich Strong.
- For Marie Owen, founding head of Glen Oak School.
- For Sister Patricia Burke, C.S.J., sister of Brother Gilbert Burke, C.S.C.
- For Shirley Keys, mother-in-law of Maintenance Director, Dan Kohn.
- For Charles Dougherty, brother of Brother Fulgence Dougherty, C.S.C.
- For Gary Wilson, father of Ryan [‘01] and Sean [‘03] Wilson.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For an end to violence in our society.
- For the families who are grieving the loss of loved ones.
- For an end to human trafficking..
- For the unemployed.
- For those who struggle with family relationships.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For a special intention.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.

ENVELOPES:

- When you need a **new supply** of envelopes, please feel free to take a supply of them from the table in the vestibule, or call Father John at the Campus Ministry Office [473-3560].
- When you **use** your envelope, please make sure that **your number** is on it. If you need to know your number, please call the Campus Ministry Office. Thanks.

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Baskets will be passed during the “Preparation Rite” and will be brought to the altar as part of the Offerings to help offset chapel daily operating expenses. When you choose to use the envelopes, your donations to Our Lady Chapel will be acknowledged so that you have a record for the IRS.

Total Offerings: Saturday [3/5/16] ----- \$ 886.00
Total Offerings: Sunday [3/6/16] ----- \$ 673.00

ANOTHER PROVERB:

We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.

THE UNENDING STORY:

One of the problems we encounter reading the Prophet Isaiah in English is that we miss the prophet's frequent use of participles. Already in middle school we learned the difference between a finite verb and a participle. When, for instance, I say: "I went to the store," the verb "went" closes the action — it's over with. On the other hand, if I say: "Going to the store," the action continues — you're waiting to hear what's going to happen while I'm going to the store. The participle "going" presumes that the action is continuing.

Thus what Isaiah is trying to say [Isaiah 43:16-21] — "It is I who made a way for you through the sea" — should really be seen in the present tense — "It is I who am opening a way for you through the sea". Speaking to a people who have been exiled for over 50 years, the prophet is forced to deal with their "we've seen or heard it all before" attitude. They are looking at God's wonderful acts of salvation as having taken place centuries before. Thus in their minds, God is not doing anything right here and now to get us out of Babylon.

That's where Isaiah's participles kick in — he is reminding the people that what God has done for his people in the past, He is continuing to do — the action is still going on; it's never over. God's saving the Israelites in Babylon during the 530's BCE just as God saved the Israelites in Egypt during the 1200's BCE.

In some sense, this theology of God's constant salvation is also behind John's Gospel. Our sacred authors never thought of themselves as historians — people dedicated just to maintaining records of the past so future people would know what happened back then. On the contrary, if parallel things weren't happening in the day and age of our biblical writers, they would have never narrated them in their various works. They were only concerned about the past because it was being mirrored in the present.

In the case of the woman taken in adultery [John 8:1-11], John is convinced that such encounters were happening in his day and age — encounters demanding the same response to sin and forgiveness that Jesus gave during his earthly ministry. Whenever we're called upon to deal with sinners, we're never to forget that each of us is also a sinner — someone in need of forgiveness, not condemnation. Salvation never ends.

That's why Paul's letter to the Church at Philippi is so important. Paul understands that nowhere in our history of salvation is salvation ever completely achieved. One of the Apostle's greatest lines is his realization that "It is not that I have already taken hold of the resurrection, or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ Jesus" [Philippians 3:8-14]. Once we chose to let the risen Jesus take over our lives, salvation never ends — it's present in everything we do, everyone we encounter, every new day we experience.

If our dying and rising with Jesus continues, so also our salvation continues.

It's a shame that some of us learned our faith in such a way that we long to return and participate in the "golden age" of that faith — the ministry of the historical Jesus. We keep forgetting that no one who personally knew the historical Jesus ever passed on anything about him that we can access today. All our Christian biblical authors — including the four evangelists — knew only the risen Jesus. They could only pass on a "participial" faith. Perhaps our middle school religion teachers would do well to learn from our middle school English teachers who taught us how to diagram a sentence!

—taken from the writings of Father Roger Karban, which appear on the internet

**REMEMBER:**

If you puff yourself up, you'll get the wind knocked right out of you.

more.

Here is what is new. Jesus is not being judicial as are the Pharisees whose interests are self-justifying performances of the Law. Jesus sends the woman back into a sense of relating as one member of the whole community. Lent, is never meant for us to be a self-purifying season so that I merely remain more an I, self-purified and self-satisfied with my penances, mortifications, religious strictness. Lent ends with community. Lent ends with Jesus rising and gathering together those who have been untombed. Lent ends with us renewing our baptismal entrances into community. Lent ends, as with the Jews of the "Second Exodus" back in our homeland together, where we belong.

—edited from the writings of Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

LENTEN NOTES:

During this sacred time, each of us is called to spiritual growth — particularly through a turning away from sin. Lent is a time for "new beginnings" — a time to grow in our relationship with God and each other. There are 3 major spiritual practices during Lent to which Scripture calls us: **prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.**

**—LENTEN REGULATIONS:**

Good Friday is a day of **fast** for all between the ages of eighteen and fifty-nine. Fasting means that one full meal for the day is allowed, along with two light meals [snacks]. No eating between meals. Those not included in these "ages" are encouraged to take upon themselves some aspects of the fast, whenever possible.

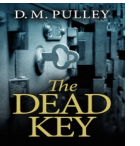
All Fridays during Lent are days of **abstinence** from meat, for those who are fourteen and older. Again, those not included in these "ages" are encouraged to participate whenever possible.

—SCHEDULE OF SPECIAL LENTEN EVENTS & SERVICES:

- **Telestai** presentation in Chapel on **Friday, Saturday & Sunday, March 11-12-13.**
- **Lenten Communal Penance Service** will be on **Monday, March 21st** at 7:00 PM
- **Mass of the Lord's Supper** on **Holy Thursday, March 24th** at 7:00 PM.
- **Simple Lunch** on **Good Friday, March 25th** at 12:30 PM.
- **Stations of the Cross** on **Good Friday, March 25th** at 1:30 PM.
- **Proclamation of the Passion, Veneration of the Cross and Communion Service** on **Good Friday, March 25th** at 3:00 PM.
- **Blessing of Easter Foods** will be at **12:00 noon** on **Saturday, March 26th**.
- **Easter Vigil Service** will be at **9:15 PM** on **Saturday, March 26th**.
- **Easter Sunday Mass** will be at **10:00 AM** on **Sunday, March 27th**.

ENJOY A WONDERFUL EVENING:

Friends of the Gates Mills Library are hosting their annual dinner on **Thursday, April 7th** at the **Chagrin Valley Hunt Club**, 7620 Old Mill Road, located by the bridge in the village of Gates Mills. **Cocktails are at 6 PM** and **Dinner will be served at 6:30 PM.** Speaker for the evening will be D.M. Pulley, winner of the 2014 Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award, and author of the mystery/thriller novel entitled: *The Dead Key*. Cost of the evening is \$45 [cocktails are cash]. Contact **Lisa Reid** at **216-533-3418** or at larworkerscomp@gmail.com to make reservations or to answer any questions.

**DIRECTION:**

Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.

—Soren Kierkegaard

WHAT TO DO WITH SINNERS?

When I was five years of age, an elderly Sister of Charity of Mt. St. Vincent in New York taught me a memorable lesson. She had caught me accusing a playmate of a “crime.” She told me to point my finger at him one more time. I did. Then she asked none too sweetly: “Do you see that while one finger is pointed at the boy, three fingers are pointed at you yourself?” As young as I was, she had made her point indelibly.

But she was not finished. “Try, James, to spend more time in the future improving your own faults,” she said with no trace of a smile. “Then you will not have time to criticize others.” To make matters worse the “charge” against my friend proved subsequently to be unjustified. I discovered the wisdom of humility.

The bad people of John’s Gospel story are the Scribes and Pharisees. They were proponents of capital punishment. None of us likes to identify with the heavies in any story; yet, national polls show that despite the pleas of America’s bishops as many as 80% of us favor capital punishment. Do we really differ then that much from the antagonists of John’s Gospel [John 8:1-11]?

Let us even refine the case more narrowly. Drunk and rowdy college students partied outside a prison in Florida. At the death hour, they cheered the electrocution of some poor wretch inside. Then, as his incinerated body passed them in a hearse, they loudly and cruelly saluted him with raised cans of beer. So much then for the innocent mirth of youth! Unhappily, though, it can be argued it was we their seniors who taught them this eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth philosophy. We have this lust for pay-back revenge even though our own Leader is the most celebrated victim of capital punishment in recorded history!

How would Jesus have reacted outside that Florida prison? I wager He would have been once again weeping. His tears would be not only for the just murdered man, but also for the college students.

How is capital punishment any different from the stoning clearly put down by Jesus in John’s Gospel? If one is genuinely pro-life — as many of us like to think we are — must we not struggle for life from the womb to the tomb? Given what the Master teaches us, must not rehabilitation rather than capital punishment be the most significant plank in our criminal justice system? And, if rehabilitation does not work, then there is always life behind bars without parole. All life is sacred.

John’s Gospel gives us a lot to think about. It can cause us to sit down face in hand and rethink our own position on many behaviors and issues. Yet, is that not what Jesus intended in the first place? After all, His audiences did regularly run Him out of almost every town He preached in. Clearly He was not throwing pious platitudes at them. Jesus remains the supreme challenger — even today.

Scholars say that early Christians found themselves upset by this Gospel account — they wished that John had never written it. In their mind, the narration has the Teacher being soft on sin. But this is sheer nonsense. Jesus does not say to the woman: “Worry not. Adultery is quite permissible.” Rather, once they were alone, Jesus does say without qualification — and probably in a very challenging tone of voice — “Go, but do not sin again.”

The next time you find yourself pointing a finger in accusation at someone, do steal a look at the three fingers that are accusingly pointing themselves at your own honorable self. Then put the wagons in a circle and reconsider your accusation. At that point, consider Mother Teresa’s advice. The fruit of silence is prayer; the fruit of prayer is faith; the fruit of faith is love; the fruit of love is service; the fruit of service is peace.

—taken from the writings of Father James Gilhooley, which appear on the internet.



have their own moral intelligence and purpose — they protect us, make us reach out for what keeps us alive, and, not least, ensure that the human race keeps perpetuating itself. Finally, God also put those earthy instincts in us to pressure us to enjoy life and taste its pleasures — while God, like a loving old grandparent watching her children at play, remains happy just to see her children’s delight in the moment, knowing that there will be time enough ahead when pain and frustration will force those desires to focus on some deeper things.

When we analyze more deeply God’s design for human nature and understand ourselves more deeply within that design, we realize that, at a level deeper than spontaneous feeling, and at a level deeper than the wisecracks we make about ourselves, we in fact do love God best; love our neighbor quite a bit; and, very happily, love whiskey and the pleasures of life quite a bit as well.

—taken from the writings of Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., which appear on the internet

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP — THE EDGE:

Our next EDGE gathering will be on **Sunday, April 10th** when we will be discussing the **Season of Easter**. We are not meeting before then because many schools taking Spring Break before Easter. Bring your friends. Come and try us out. Come and find out what **the EDGE** is all about. If you have not joined us before, that’s OK. **Just call the office and let us know that you are going to be coming.** We ask you to do this because there will be food involved. Our EDGE Youth Group has a Faith-Service-Social component, and we look forward to your participation. All are welcome. **If you can’t join us on April 10th, our next meeting will take place on Sunday, April 24th when we will be going to clean up Calvary Cemetery.** Please join us for a wonderful experience.



READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

- Monday:** Daniel 13:1-62, John 8:12-20
- Tuesday:** Numbers 21:4-9, John 8:21-30
- Wednesday:** Daniel 3:14-95, John 8:31-42
- Thursday:** Genesis 17:3-9, John 8:51-59
- Friday:** Jeremiah 20:10-13, John 10:31-42
- Saturday:** 2 Samuel 7:4-16, Romans 4:13-22, Matthew 1:16-21
- Palm Sunday:** Luke 19:28-40, Isaiah 50:4-7, Philippians 2:6-11, Luke 22:14-23:56

LIFE TEEN:

Our next Life Teen gathering will be on **Saturday evening, March 12th** when we will have dinner at 6:30 PM and attend the Passion Play “Tetelestai”. **Or if you can’t come Saturday, come on Sunday at 2 PM.** Bring your friends. Come and try us out. Life Teen generally meets right after Sunday Mass — from **11:30 AM—1:00 PM** in the **Lennon Board Room**. Life Teen is open to **all high school aged young people**. **Just call the office and let us know that you are going to be coming.** We ask you to do this because there will be food involved. We have a great deal of fun together and we grow in our faith at the same time. **Respond to your texts and/or emails, or call the chapel office [440-473-3560] to be notified.** If you can’t join us on March 12th, **our next meeting will be on Sunday, April 3rd, when we will be discussing the real meaning of Easter.** Please join us for a wonderful experience. Please continue to remember all our teens and young people in your prayers.



HUMAN NATURE — IS IT SOMEHOW ALL WRONG?

An American humorist was once asked what he loved most in life. This was his reply: “I love women best; whiskey next; my neighbor a little; and God hardly at all!” This flashed in my mind recently when, while giving a lecture, a woman asked this question: “Why did God build us in one way and then almost all of the time expect us to act in a way contrary to our instincts?” I knew what she meant. Our natural instincts and spontaneous desires generally seem at odds with that towards which they are supposedly directed — namely, God and eternal life. A religious perspective, it would seem, calls us to reverse the order described by that American humorist, that is, we’re to love God first, our neighbor just as deeply, and then accord to the human pleasures we are so naturally drawn to a very subordinate role. But that’s not what happens most of the time. Generally we are drawn, and drawn very powerfully, towards the things of this earth — other people, pleasure, beautiful objects, sex, money, comfort. These seemingly have a more-powerful grip on us than do the things of faith and religion. Doesn’t this then put our natural feelings at odds with how God intended us to feel and act? Why are we, seemingly, built in one way and then called to live in another way?

The question is a good one, and, unfortunately, is often answered in a manner that merely deepens the quandary. Often we are simply told that we shouldn’t feel this way, that not putting God and religious things first in our feelings is a religious and moral fault — as if our natural wiring was somehow all wrong and we were responsible for its flaw. But that answer is both simplistic and harmful — it misunderstands God’s design, lays a guilt-trip on us, and has us feeling bipolar vis-à-vis our natural make-up and the demands of faith.

How do we reconcile the seeming incongruity between our natural make-up and God’s intent for us?

We need to understand human instinct and human desire at a deeper level. We might begin with St. Augustine’s memorable phrase — “You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” When we analyze our natural makeup, natural instincts, and natural desires more deeply, we see that all of these ultimately are drawing us beyond the more-immediate things and pleasures with which they appear to be obsessed. They are drawing us, persistently and unceasingly, towards God.

Karl Rahner, in trying to explain this, makes a distinction between what we desire explicitly and what we desire implicitly. Our instincts and natural desires draw us towards various explicit things — love for another person, friendship with someone, a piece of art or music, a vacation, a movie, a good meal, a sexual encounter, an achievement that brings us honor, a sporting event, and countless other things that, on the surface at least, would seem to have nothing to do with God and are seemingly drawing our attention away from God. But, as Rahner shows, and as is evident in our experience, in every one of those explicit desires there is present — implicitly, beneath the desire and as the deepest part of that desire — the longing for and pursuit of something deeper. Ultimately we are longing for the depth that grounds every person and object, God. To cite one of Rahner’s more graphic examples, a man obsessed with sexual desire who seeks out a prostitute is, implicitly, seeking the bread of life, irrespective of his crass surface intent.

God didn’t make a mistake in designing human desire. God’s intent is written into very DNA of desire. Ultimately our make-up directs us towards God, no matter how obsessive, earthy, lustful, and pagan a given desire might appear on a given day. Human nature is not at odds with the call of faith — not at all.

Moreover, those powerful instincts within our nature, which can seem so selfish and amoral at times,



DISCOVERING THE FREEDOM OF FORGIVENESS:

John’s Gospel for this 5th Week in Lent shows us Jesus is teaching in the outer court of the Temple. The scribes and Pharisees present a woman caught in the act of adultery and ask Jesus whether she should be stoned to death as commanded by Moses. It was a clever trap — if Jesus says “yes”, he goes against his teaching on compassionate forgiveness and puts himself in conflict with the Romans who reserved capital punishment to themselves; if he says “no”, he alienates the Jews who interpreted the Mosaic law strictly. Avoiding the trap, Jesus wrote on the ground and said: “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” After he wrote on the ground a second time, her accusers went away one by one beginning with the elders. Left alone with her, Jesus noted that no one was there to condemn her. Then Jesus said to the woman: “Neither do I condemn you. Go and from now on do not sin anymore” [John 8:1-11].

Jesus cleverly avoided the trap set for him by the religious leaders, shaming them and gaining respect for himself. In the process, he reinforced his consistent teaching on mercy, forgiveness and compassion. Jesus is the face of God’s mercy. His example and teaching proclaim the good news that we are not imprisoned in our past sins, mistakes and failures. With God’s help there are fresh starts, new beginnings, second chances, and clean slates. Sin tends to confine, constrict and imprison while grace liberates, opens new possibilities and restores hope. Jesus had mercy on this woman — separated from her paramour, exposed to public shame, victimized by a patriarchal system, used with evil intent, and threatened by death — thus offering her the opportunity to cast off all these burdens and begin anew.

The Christian claim is that Christ can do the same for us today — liberating us from our sins and opening up a better future for us. Some people know this to be true from personal experience. An elderly woman celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation mentioned, as she always did, her major fault of being judgmental. The priest suggested as a penance that she pay someone an honest complement each day for a month. Diligent in doing the penance, she found herself, surprisingly, having fewer judgmental thoughts about her relatives and friends and seeing them in a much more positive light. A young man with a long standing masturbation problem started praying to the Lord each night for the gift of greater sexual maturity which seemed to reduce the intensity and frequency of his temptations.

Have you experienced forgiveness in your life? In what way has it been liberating?

—taken from the writings of Father Jim Bacik which appear on the internet

CLEAN OUT THOSE CLOSETS AND SERVE OTHERS:

Winter is here— and Spring is coming. Another time to once again clean out the closets. Clothing that no longer fits, or has been replaced by new items, can become great items for others. Always remember the words of Jesus: “The poor you shall always have with you” [Matthew 26:11]. Please continue to bring your *gently used* men’s, women’s and children’s clothing to the Lennon Board Room, or place it in the cedar chest which is located in the Chapel narthex [just press the key button to open the chest]. We partner with Fatima Center to help provide clothing for general use. Also, **business work clothing for this season is especially needed. The Fatima Center helps men and women prepare for job interviews.** If you have some of these items, this would be a good time to send them along. Clothing for all seasons is accepted, but please try to keep in mind that storage facilities are limited at Fatima — so it would help if you could focus on winter and spring items at this time. You may pick up a tax form when you drop off the clothing here at Our Lady Chapel — there are forms in the cedar chest. Clothing may be brought on the weekend, or during the week. Thank you. **If you have any questions, please contact Patty in the chapel office [440-473-3560].**



FORGIVENESS AS AN ACT OF MERCY:

By now all of us should be aware that this is the “Year of Mercy.” Mercy is an important aspect of our faith. In fact, it is hard to overestimate the importance of the virtue of mercy for any Christian believer. John’s Gospel [8:1-11] gives us a very good example of how Christ himself showed mercy. A woman has been caught in adultery.

It is an interesting story, and there are several different themes running through it. Perhaps the most obvious theme is the hypocrisy shown by the scribes and Pharisees who brought this woman to Jesus. We can certainly question their motives because it is not entirely clear whether they really intend to punish the woman or are using her sin as an oblique way of attacking Jesus. Of course, by dragging the woman in front of Jesus and parading her deeds before the crowds gathered there only adds to her misery and this shows that they are not at all interested in her rehabilitation — she has merely become a pawn in the greater game of trying to outsmart Jesus.

We could also go into the question of where her companion in adultery is lurking. The fact that he is missing reflections the male dominated society of Jesus’ time — and even today. While this is certainly true — and really quite deplorable — it is not intended by John to be the point of the story. But it does demonstrate again, Jesus’ tendency to reach out to defend the most powerless in society.

The scribes and Pharisees want to stone the woman because they say this is what the Law of Moses demands. But we know from other sources that the Romans had removed the authority to sentence anyone to death from the Jewish courts. So clearly this action is a test. According to them, if Jesus adheres to the Law of Moses then he can be denounced to the Romans, but if he rejects the Law of Moses this will undermine his credibility with observant Jews.

Jesus is well aware what the Pharisees are doing and he bends down to draw on the ground. This is an act of indifference, perhaps even an insult to these local worthies who expect to be taken seriously; and we can imagine that they were affronted by Jesus doodling in the dirt. It is as if Jesus is tired of their little games and simply refuses to debate with them.

This drawing in the dust has a dramatic twist to it when Jesus stands up and looks them in the eye and says those famous words: “Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone.” Jesus does not actually specify sexual sin, even though the woman’s sin is of this type, but one can imagine that this is how the Pharisees and the scribes interpreted his words. Suddenly they are reluctant and one by one withdraw from the scene. This leaves the two alone — Jesus and the woman. He says: “Has no one condemned you? Then neither do I condemn you, go away and don’t sin anymore.”

We see here a beautiful distinction between the recognition of the sin and the condemnation of the sinner. Jesus clearly acknowledges that the woman has sinned; there is no brushing under the carpet here. But he does not condemn nor punish her. He merely tells her not to sin any more. You will notice that Jesus does not ask her if she is sorry — nor does he expect her to show remorse. It is a very simple transaction — she has sinned, he shows mercy. St Augustine summed it up in a simple phrase: “there are left the two — misery and mercy”. She is miserable, he is merciful. Nothing more is required.

This is a beautiful story with a profound message, and it provides us with plenty of fruit for meditation. The questions we are left with though are these: how are we to show mercy ourselves? And how is our society to best frame its laws to get the balance between mercy and punishment right.

Let us take the second of these first. I was a prison chaplain for twelve years and having observed the justice system close at hand I can tell you that there is very little that is got right by the legal system in this or any other country. There are countless acts of injustice perpetrated by the so-called justice system.



are ashamed. And all of us wonder with Shirley and Fred: “Will God forgive me?” He forgave the woman who the law said should be killed for her sin. He will forgive the Shirleys and Freds if they are truly sorry and determined to change their lives. He will forgive you and me if we are willing to get up out of the mud and do our best to avoid the sins that threw us into the slime.

All of us to some degree or other have negative images of ourselves — we don’t like ourselves; we don’t understand how someone else can love us. We have heard parents, teachers, youth ministers, priests and others tell us — rightly so — that we have to fight against the negative feelings that we have about ourselves if we are ever going to be sane, mature people. This is all true. Still, we are not Mr. or Mrs. Perfect — and never will be. There is a hint of truth in the negativity we see. But God loves you and me for whom we are, with our blemishes. And He demands that we love ourselves — not with the love of conceit: “I am so wonderful” — but with the love that says: “I am who God created me to be, with tremendous talents in some areas and less talent in other areas.” When we realize that we have behaved in a sinful way, it is normal for the negative view of ourselves to start dominating our thoughts. We become so overwhelmed by this view that we give up on ourselves. We do all sorts of horrible things because we figure: “I am not good, so why try?”

Let’s take another look at that woman at Jesus’ feet. She was sinful. She should have been killed for her sins — at least according to the law of her time. That probably wasn’t the first time she committed adultery. It was most likely just the first time she was caught. She also probably said: “I am not good, so why try to be good?” Why try, sinful lady? Try because Jesus sees good in you. He loves you and is picking you up and telling you that he will not hold your sins against you. Now, go change your life and stop sinning like that.

Why try, Shirley and Fred? Try because Jesus sees good in you and loves you. Throw yourselves at his feet. Go to confession. Then know that Jesus forgives you and will not hold your horrible sins against you. Now get up and stop sinning like that. And what about you and I? Try because Jesus sees good in us. We need to see the good that is in ourselves. Try because Jesus forgives us. We throw ourselves at his feet. We go to confession. And he forgives us. Now, we need to forgive ourselves. Try because Jesus lifts us out of the mud and tells us that we need to and can change our lives. We can avoid these horrible sins.

There is no limit to the Lord’s love for us. Nor is there a limit to His desire to forgive us. The only limits there are to love and forgiveness in our lives are the limits we put on ourselves. If we can only realize how much we are loved, and how much we are forgiven, we will be determined — like the woman in the Gospel — to stay united to the source of that love and forgiveness, to stay united to our Compassionate Merciful Savior.

Perhaps none of these thoughts have ever occurred to you. Thank God. Perhaps you have never done anything that you felt could not be forgiven. Again, thank God. But there are people out there — and perhaps you are one of them — who avoid confession because they cannot bear looking into themselves. We pray today that these people and all people who have a deep need for forgiveness, may come before the Lord and allow Him to pick them up and say to them: “Neither do I accuse you, now go and sin no more.”

—taken from the writings for Father Joseph Pellegrino, which appear on the internet.

AMAZON.COM:

Please remember that when you want to buy something from Amazon.com, you need to first go to www.ourladychapel.org and click on the Amazon logo at the bottom of the home page! Because of this simple step — and at no cost to the purchaser — Our Lady Chapel receives a percentage of all purchases that are made from Amazon.com. Ever since we have begun this program, we have consistently been receiving significant checks from Amazon that are being credited to help pay for chapel expenses. This affinity program remains in effect throughout the year, so we ask everyone to continue to remember to start your purchases at Amazon on the Our Lady Chapel home page! Thank you.



GO AND SIN NO MORE:

“Father, what I did was horrible. I am so ashamed. I don’t know if God will forgive me.” So many times people have said this — or something like this to a priest. In all cases, the people have not forgiven themselves; so they think that God will not forgive them. Read these two stories. Both are about high school teens who behaved terribly and who thought that they could not be forgiven:

The first story is about Shirley. Shirley did her best to destroy Cynthia. At their high school, homecoming court was reserved for seniors. Shirley had her eye on this from the first time she was at the homecoming game during her freshman year when she saw the court. More than that, she was determined to be the queen. She was pretty well convinced that she would get there. And then junior year started, and Cynthia showed up — transferred in from another school. Cynthia was beautiful and smart. She was popular. The boys, the other girls, and even the teachers talked about Cynthia like she was the greatest person ever. Shirley had to find a way to eliminate Cynthia from the competition. Shirley hatched her plot. She made up stories about Cynthia. She got some of the boys to tell lies about her. She hinted to the teacher who was the class moderator that Cynthia transferred to the school to escape her reputation. She got others to bully Cynthia on the internet. It all became too much for Cynthia. Instead of telling her parents or anyone, she tried to hurt herself. Thank God her mother found her and called 911. Cynthia went to the hospital and then to a psychiatric facility. Soon, word got out that someone was trying to destroy her. Shirley knew that she was that someone. She didn’t think it would all go that far. But it did. Now, if Cynthia never recovers or is scarred for life, it is Shirley’s fault. “I don’t know if God will forgive me,” Shirley says.

“He will,” John’s Gospel [8:1-11] tells us. Just as Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery — caught doing something that would normally have led to her begin stoned to death — so also will God forgive Shirley. He will tell her to get up and stop sinning — stop hurting people. Shirley now has to forgive herself for being so mean, cruel, and sinful.

The second story is about Fred. Fred was even worse than Shirley. Fred was responsible for taking a life. Here’s what happened. Fred got Lois pregnant. This really wasn’t a mistake — he did it to get back at her girlfriend Clare whom he had dated and who had dumped him a few months earlier. Fred told Clare that he wanted to take their relationship to “the next level.” You know what he wanted. Clare said: “No way.” When Fred kept pushing her and even started getting physical, she gave him the old heave-ho. That’s when Fred decided to use Clare’s best friend to get back at her. He started going with Lois, lied to her about his eternal love, and wore her down until their relationship became sinful. He wanted Lois to get pregnant because he knew she would tell Clare. Fred was pleased with himself. After that bit of perverted fun, Fred had to deal with Lois’ concern about the baby. “No big deal,” he said to her. “A lot of girls have abortions. I’ll take you and pay for it.” And he did. Then Lois became depressed. Clare hated him more than ever. But more than all that, Fred kept thinking about the baby. What had he done? He used Lois for vengeance, had sex with her numerous times to get her pregnant, and then had the child — his child — killed. “What I have done is beyond evil,” Fred said. He was right. “I don’t know if God can forgive me.” Here he was wrong. He can, and He will as long as Fred was going to radically change his life, stop using people — particularly girls — and start fighting for life. Most important, he had to get up from the mud he made and sin no more.

These are two extreme cases of high school sinners who were forgiven. In both cases, they might have legal ramifications — criminal charges — they would have to answer to, but they were still forgiven by the Lord. Now, hopefully none of us has done anything that even remotely approaches these degrees of sin. But maybe we have. The fact is that everyone — myself included — has sinned in ways that we



It is a very blunt instrument and it cannot easily take into account of individual circumstances, nor is it good at distinguishing between wildly differing situations. Yes, as a society we should constantly endeavor to improve our justice system so that it is ever more fair and equitable. We should certainly aim to re-educate and rehabilitate offenders. But we have to also realize that some persistent offenders simply never learn, and they constantly repeat their criminal behavior. Dealing with such persons is always going to be very difficult.

But what about ourselves? How do we put into practice the example of mercy that Christ shows us? First we note that Christ does not ignore sinfulness — he always acknowledges wrongdoing. But he is not so concerned with whether it is this law or that law that is broken; what he is interested in is how people offend against the law of love. What Christ wants is for us all to love, and he is dismayed when we fall short in this regard. According to Jesus, all sin is the expression of a lack of love.

When we understand that Christ wants love above everything else, then we begin to understand how to exercise mercy. We realize that mercy is an expression of love. And when we analyze how a lover thinks we soon understand that those who love constantly forgive their beloved. The lover constantly puts the best interpretation on the actions of the beloved and sees any aberrations as a mistake. The constant wish of the lover is to forgive the beloved. This is what we mean when we say that “love is blind.”

If we are going to be true ministers of Christ’s mercy, then we have to love with a bigger heart. We have to look at those who have offended us or others with the eyes of a lover. We have to recognize that they are truly loved in the eyes of God, and we have to accept them as objects of our own love. When we do this then forgiveness and mercy immediately follow.

We should not be heavy emphasis on Jesus’ words: “Go and sin no more.” When a sinner experiences a true expression of love, then he or she will not be inclined to sin again. Love builds up a person; love edifies them; the experience of love heals them and makes them better.

This is what we need in the world: more love. Some people think we need more strictness, more moral guidelines and better and better boundaries, but I think that what we need is more love, more kindness, more goodness, more understanding, more mercy. To me this is what Jesus came to bring us; a new attitude, a new concern to put love at the very center of everything that we do.

Some have wondered what Jesus wrote on the ground. Some think that Jesus listed the sins that each of them was guilty of; others think that Jesus wrote out the ten commandments; still others feel that he wrote on the ground to remind every one that written words are not important and that they are easily brushed away. No matter how you approach this question, know that when Jesus wrote on the ground it was an act of mercy. It took Jesus’ eyes off the scribes and Pharisees, thus giving them time to consider what they were doing. Jesus then looks up and says: “Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone.” And he lowers his eyes again and returns to his doodling. This gives them more time; it also avoids anyone thinking that Jesus was looking at them in a judgmental way.

Giving them time allows those gathered there to disappear while still maintaining their dignity. They knew that what they were doing was just as sinful as what that woman had done, but they are not judged by Jesus — he allows them to slip away quietly and without notice.

I think that we all need to realize that every single thing that Jesus did was an act of mercy. The question we are left with is whether all of our actions are equally merciful.

—taken from the writings of Father Alex McAllister, S.D.S., which appear on the internet

CHILDREN’S BULLETINS:

Each week, we are making available a **Children’s Worship Bulletin**. There are **two editions:** [3-6] and [7-12]. They are available on the table as you leave. The Bulletin focuses on the readings for the week. These are wonderful tools for your children to learn more about the scripture readings for the week. We hope you will take them for your families or your grandchildren. Thanks.

Children’s Worship
Bulletin ✨

GOD BLESS EMOTIONS:

I feel way too much. I laugh for too long, and shed tears over small disappointments, and so much of the time I wish that I didn't. I wish that I could get through my days with that pleasant but indifferent expression I see on so many faces. I wish that I could always be the stronger, more confident, not-so-easily-shaken version of myself that I only get glimpses of. Instead, I often wonder if God didn't make my heart of fragile glass.

And I get the feeling that I'm not alone. All around me I see people trying to numb and protect themselves from having to risk feeling too much. Sometimes it's something like sarcasm or self-deprecation — subtle tactics that help protect us from other people and from having to care too much. Other times we use more overt tactics like drinking, self-harm, or masturbation. No matter what it is, we all have some sort of default distraction that we run to when we feel overwhelmed or hurt or like we just can't handle our emotions anymore.

But these tactics never last. All these things leave us aching for something more — longing to experience life. I think that's because God gave us our emotions — the full, terrible, wonderful spectrum of them — to connect us to life and to Him.

But what are we supposed to do about all the emotions we don't want to be connected to? Could God really use all those horrible feelings to connect us to Him? "Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted" [Matthew 5:4]. I used to have a horrible habit of skipping over this particular beatitude. I just never got anything out of it — thinking of it more as a promise of future consolation than as a definition of "blessedness." So what is it about people who mourn that earns them blessing from God?

It's their courage to face all the realities and all the experiences of life. It's their wisdom in seeing their emotions as a gift. In order to mourn — to truly feel the depth of mourning, sadness, depression, guilt, anger, shame, anxiety, loneliness, dread, remorse, fear — we can't numb ourselves. We can't numb ourselves to our emotions and obtain this blessedness that God intends for us. We can't praise God and fear experiencing the life that He gave us.

Our emotions can be confusing, but they aren't the enemy we often make them out to be. God is strong, but He is also sensitive. Sometimes it can feel like God couldn't possibly understand how we feel. It seems like we try and we try — we put our best foot forward time and time again — and still we're rejected, we're hurt, we're met only with more pain. Numbing ourselves seems like the only option. But who could understand this better than Christ? He lived His whole life for others. All He wanted — and still wants — is to love us and to be loved by us. But instead He is so frequently and so persistently rejected. His love for all of us is more pure than any other love that anyone could offer, and so much of the time we respond with indifference and neglect and anger. If you want to love and be loved, then Jesus is right there with you. If you feel alone, you're not alone; you're in good company.

When Lazarus died, Jesus didn't shrug His shoulders and say: "That's okay. I'll just raise him from the dead real quick." No, He wept [John 11:35]. Jesus mourned. He allowed proper time — human time — for His emotions, and in doing so He honored all the tears and heartbreak and intensely emotional roller-coasters we find ourselves on every day.

When His friends abandoned Him in His greatest hour of need, Jesus didn't hesitate or back away or search for some way to lessen the blow. He took the full force of the blow out of love for them, and He forgave them. We have the same choice. We can try to convince ourselves that we aren't hurt, that we're totally fine, and numb away the hurt. But what if we didn't? We can also take the emotional beating and forgive the people who hurt us and rejected us for every second of it. Jesus knows that the hurt is what makes the forgiveness and the peace that come after so powerful.

And then there's me. I hurt Jesus a lot. Every time I turn away, I sin — I put other things above Him. It hurts Him beyond my understanding. It would be so much easier for Him if He left me alone, if



He stopped loving me, if He decided that He had finally tried enough times. But He doesn't leave and He doesn't numb it away — He takes every blow I throw at Him. He does the same for you.

The catechism specifically states that "passions are neither good nor evil. They are morally qualified only to the extent that they effectively engage reason and will" [CCC, #1767]. We are all entitled to feel everything we feel. It's when we choose to act and speak that we are responsible to keep our emotions in check. Emotion isn't the sin — it's our handling of it.

I used to think that I didn't hold grudges. Friends had left me, and my peers had mocked me, but I never held any anger towards them. I thought that it must just be part of my personality — that I never felt the need to stay angry. And then, one night during a retreat, I let it all out. I started yelling at God, and it hit me that I was actually angry at a lot of people. I realized that I had never held a grudge before because I hadn't cared enough about those relationships to feel hurt. Now, I was feeling completely betrayed and alone, and I had no idea how to handle it.

The more I looked back over the last couple years of my life the more I realized that I had employed everything from isolation to arrogance to protect myself. I had taken to talking down to people and icing out friends who genuinely cared about me just to punish them. Slowly, I started trying to forgive and let go — but with no effect. I succeeded only in turning my emotional life into a pendulum swinging violently back and forth between peace and war, forgiveness and hatred. And then I found a journaling exercise in the back of a prayer book. It was an exercise for emotional healing of all kinds, and it essentially walked me through writing a letter to the person I was angry at. It instructed me to keep writing until absolutely everything I was thinking and feeling was on the page. Even if I ran out of words, I simply wrote "I am so angry" over and over until I couldn't write it anymore. Next, it had me pray over the letter, asking God for the grace to forgive and move on. Then, I wrote a new letter. This time, the letter was from the other person to me. It contained everything I wish that person would say to me, and I prayed over that one, too. Lastly, I wrote one final letter from me. It contained all my reasons for choosing forgiveness over wrath.

This exercise terrified me. When I first read it, all I could think was: "But isn't this a sin? I can't be angry. I just have to be okay." But I was dead wrong. God didn't want me to suppress my emotions — He wanted me to express them to Him so that He could heal them. I had to realize that it's my unexpressed, bottled up emotions that cause me to sin far more than the expressed ones that I give to God. There was never anything wrong with having an emotional reaction to being hurt. The sin happened when I took it out on everyone around me — failing to love them as God does.

Among all the other things that Jesus teaches us with His life, He teaches us not to reject our emotions. He deigns them worthy of Himself, and because of that they are worthy of me too. As easy as it is to push my feelings away, I know there's a better way — the way that reminds me that God delights in my laughter and holds my heart when it's broken. It's the way that brings me closer to God as I strive to take in every moment of the life He is giving me, and never to run away from it.

God has given us this beautiful gift of experiencing our lives through our emotions without any culpability or judgment placed on it. And He wants us to use this gift. He wants us to let ourselves laugh too long and cry too often, to tell someone when we're struggling and to act silly when we feel like it. As scripture puts it: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every affair under the heavens. A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance" [Ecclesiastes 3:1,4].

—taken from the writings of Sophia Swinford, an associate of the Bible Geek.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

Father John will be available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you on **every Saturday** between **3:30 – 4:00 PM**. Confessions are also available "by appointment." The Reconciliation Room is located in the small chapel directly across from Father John's Office

