

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Blessing of Teachers & Students ~

Blessing of our teachers:

**O Lord God,
in your wisdom and love
you surround us
with the mysteries of the universe.
You sent us your Son
to teach us by word and example
that true wisdom comes from you alone.**

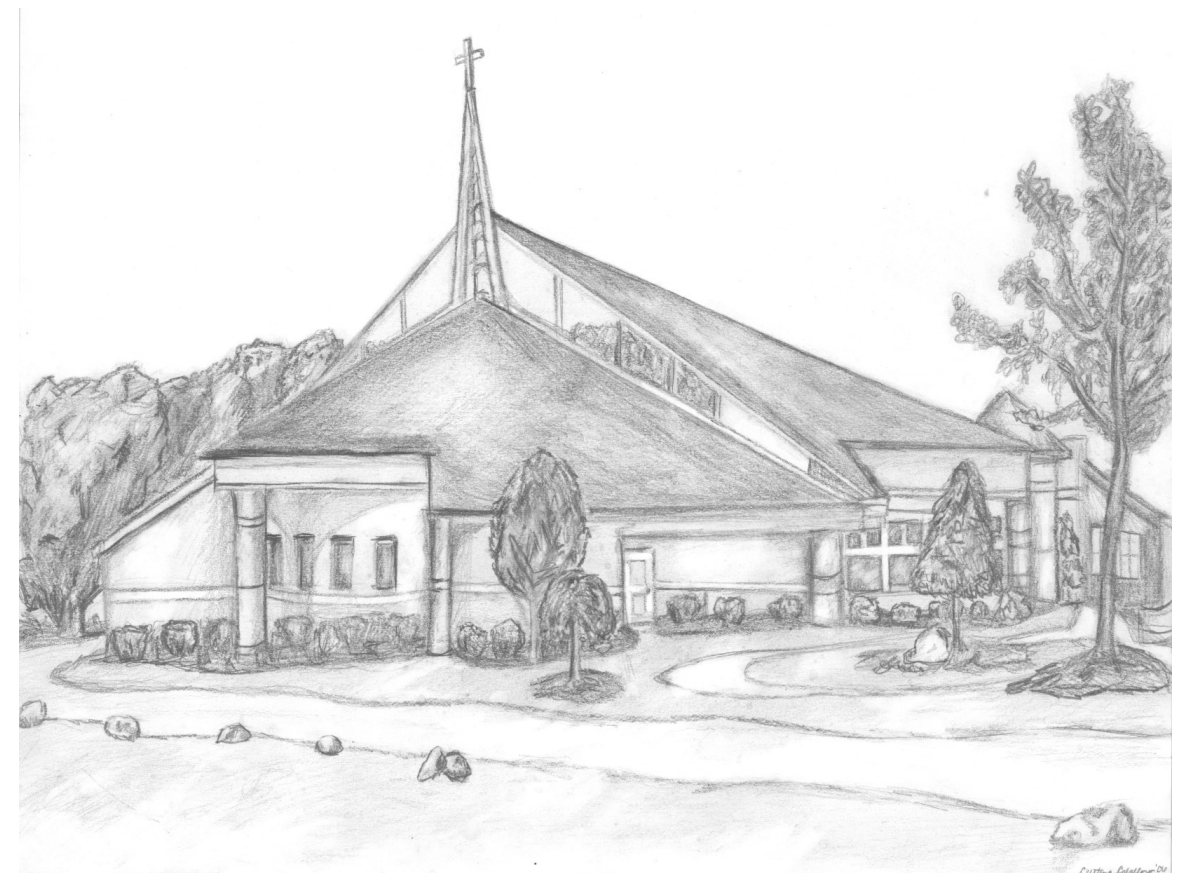
**Send your Holy Spirit upon our teachers.
Fill them with your wisdom and blessings.
Grant that they may devote themselves
to their calling to be teachers,
and share what you have given them
and what they have learned from others.
Amen.**

Blessing of Students:

**O Lord God,
your Spirit of wisdom fills the earth
and teaches us your ways.
Look upon these students.
Let them enjoy their learning
and take delight in new discoveries.
Help them to persevere in their studies
and give them the desire to learn all things well.**

**Grant that they may follow in your path,
learning the lessons of truth and love,
and may they share with others,
the truths that they have learned,
their energy for life
and the goodness of their hearts.
Amen.**

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.

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.
phone: [440] 473-3560 or 216-570-9276 [cell]. e-mail: blazekj@gilmour.org

IMPORTANT STREAMING INFORMATION:

As of today **Livestreaming of all Chapel Masses and events will be seen at www.gilmour.org/olc. You can also go to the usual Chapel's facebook page: Our Lady Chapel at Gilmour Academy.** Chapel livestream will no longer be through Gilmour.org/live.

BLESSING OF OUR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS — AUGUST 25-26:

Our school year begins on August 23rd. Giving everyone a few days to “settle in”, we would like to gather our Students and Teachers as they begin the journey of 2021-2022, by sharing a blessing of God upon them. As a faith community, we want your school year to be filled with the joy and excitement of life, as well as the presence of God. **Join us at our Masses this weekend of August 28-29 for this special blessing of our students and teachers.**

**FAITH EDUCATION FOR OUR CHILDREN:**

We are going to resume Faith Education Classes for our children, beginning in the fall. So it is important that you register your child. If you have a child — or know of a child — who is not enrolled in a Catholic School, and who needs to receive faith education, please enroll them in our Faith Education experience. Our **Faith Education Program** will help to fulfill your on-going religious education. **Our program runs from grades K-8. Students in grades 9-12 are encouraged to participate in our Life Teen Program.** We look forward to having your child join us in learning about and sharing our faith. **Please call the Chapel office [440-473-3560] with the needed information in order to enroll your child in our program. Enrollment for next fall can be made at this time.**

**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — SEPTEMBER 18th:**

Our Savior Lutheran Church Food Pantry has instituted **new procedures** because of the Coronavirus. **Thus they help pre-packing nonperishables in bags on Thursday evening beginning at 5 PM.** They will continue this prepacking on Friday if needed. Check with Elina Gurney on this. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help packaging the items from the foodbank into the prepacked bags.** Only volunteers will be allowed in the Church building, so you will be protected against the virus. Clients will remain outside in their cars. **The food pantry is then open from 9:30 AM—1:30 PM on Saturday.**



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.

Please let Elina Gurney know if you would like to help. You can do this through the chapel office [440-473-3560] or by emailing Elina Gurney at gurney.oh@gmail.com. In this critical time, this is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

TO PRAY IS TO LIVE:

Maybe someone will say to you: “You have to forgive yourself.” But that isn't possible. What is possible is to open your hands without fear, so that the One who loves you can blow your sins away. Then the coins you considered indispensable for your life prove to be little more than light dust that a soft breeze will whirl away, leaving only a grin or a chuckle behind. Then you feel a bit of new freedom and praying becomes a joy — a spontaneous reaction to the world and the people around you. Praying then becomes effortless, inspired, and lively, or peaceful and quiet. When you recognize the festive and the still moments as moments of prayer, then you gradually realize that to pray is to live. —Henri Nouwen

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Serena DiCillo, daughter of David DiCillo [*84] and Polly Duval DiCillo [*84], and granddaughter of long-time Gilmour teacher, m Bonnie DiCillo, and niece of John [*83], Dawn [*86], and Dan [*88] DiCillo and Laurie Duval Muller-Girard [*81]
- For Virginia DiPuccio, mother of Dominic DiPuccio [*82], and grandmother of Dominic [*14], Matthew [*17], Sophia [*19], Armand [*19], Lena [*20], Michael [*22], and Izzy [*25] DiPuccio, who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.
- For Katie Poelking [*01], sister of TJ Poelking [*98], who is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.
- For Judy Hale, who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For Elaine Hocevar, wife of Assistant Hockey Coach, Greg Hocevar, and mother of Greg [*97], Matt [*98], Ryan [*00], and Sarah [*01] Hocevar, who is undergoing treatment for a serious heart condition.
- For Dwuan "Juan" Smith [*32], who is undergoing medical treatment for breathing issues.
- For Gary Buck who is undergoing medical procedures on his eyes.
- For Richard Weakland, grandfather of Alex [*05], Vincent [*07], Nick [*09], Zachary [*17], and former Gilmour Student, Sarah Hostoffer, who is seriously ill.
- For Father James Caddy, former pastor of St. Francis, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For the people of Haiti and all the victims of the earthquake..
- For a family going through a difficult time.
- For an end to violence and racial injustice in our society.
- For a growth in awareness of the blessing of family life.
- For all those struggling with various addictions.
- For an end to sexual abuse and lack of respect for human persons.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.
- For a greater awareness of our call to create a more humane and just society.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10, Matthew 23:13-22

Tuesday: Revelation 21:9-14, John 1:45-51

Wednesday: 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13, Matthew 23:27-32

Thursday: 1 Thessalonians 3:7-13, Matthew 24:42-51

Friday: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, Matthew 25:1-13

Saturday: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-11, Matthew 25:14-30

22nd Week in Ordinary Time: Deuteronomy 4:1-8, James 1:17-27, Mark 7:1-23

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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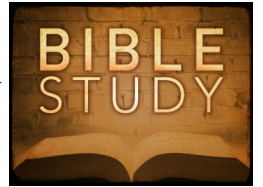
PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Rose Marie Mills, step-mother of John Mills, step-grandmother of Morgan Mills [‘11], who is critically ill
- For Ray Gruss who is battling cancer.
- For John Weathers, who is undergoing treatment for liver cancer.
- For Bruce Schwartz, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Bill Barrett, who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.
- For Dale Rusnik, uncle of Jakob Bennish [‘30], who is undergoing treatment for many medical issues.
- For Cheryl Dukes, grandmother of Juan Smith [‘32], who is undergoing treatment for COVID-19
- For David Patterson [‘83], brother of Charles [‘79] and Neil [‘81] Patterson, who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For Cailin Stubbs, mother of Kiki [‘23] and Trevor [‘26] Bilant, who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Mary Curran, mother of Megan [‘10], Carolyn [‘12], and Catherine [‘17] Curran, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For John Zippay, who is critically ill.
- For Addison McKito, sister of Aidan McKito [‘24], who is undergoing treatment for Hodgkin’s Lymphoma.
- For Vicki Veldon, aunt of Allie [‘11] and Joseph [‘12] Lencewicz, who is critically ill as the result of Myeloma
- For Darlene Lonardo, mother of Joseph Lonardo [‘00], and grandmother of Angelina [‘22] and Giana [‘22] Lonardo, who is undergoing treatment for leukemia.
- For Frank Nannicola, grandfather of Cassie [‘17], Frank [‘18], and Mia [‘19] Nannicola, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jill Shemory, mother of Adam Shemory [‘08], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Christine Maharg, mother of Lily Maharg [‘21], who is seriously ill with cancer.
- For Dave Howard, uncle of Gilmour Art instructor, Susan Southard, who is battling cancer.
- For Brian Fitzgerald, who is seriously ill with brain cancer.
- For Margaret Malarney [‘24] who continues rehab and medical care.
- For Bernice Girgash, aunt of Basketball Coach and Counselor, Dan DeCrane, and great aunt of Lexie DeCrane [‘34], who is undergoing treatment for cancer..
- For Krishna Gupta, Sister of Science teacher, Neena Goel, aunt of Nikhil [‘13] and Nupur [‘17] Goel, who is undergoing treatment for a brain bleed
- For Tara Hyland [‘07], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Chris Nash, cousin of Basketball Coach and Counselor, Dan DeCrane, and 2nd cousin of Lexie DeCrane [‘34], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Karuna Singla, Sister-in-law of Science teacher, Neena Goel, aunt of Nikhil [‘13] and Nupur [‘17] Goel, who is undergoing treatment for bone cancer.
- For Melita Chiacchiari, mother of Mark [‘94], mother-in-law of Michelle DeBacco [‘96] who is undergoing further treatment for cancer.
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian [‘09], Rosa [‘12] and Edwin [‘17] Heryak, who is undergoing treatment for MSA.
- For Tom Podnar, father of Lower School art teacher, Eileen Sheehan, who is awaiting a heart transplant.
- For Jan Poorman, who is under the care of hospice.



NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 1st:

Virtual Bible Study will return to our usual Wednesday evening gatherings on Wednesday, September 1st at 6:30 PM. We will continue to meet bi-weekly throughout August and into the school year. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God’s word. It’s a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can’t come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God’s word. **Our topic for this Bible Study will be: The role of the plagues in God’s plan**



If you text or email Father John [blazekj@gilmour.org] he will send you the zoom link and password. This is an important step to prevent negative intruders.

We also need your help — we need future topics. **So, if you have a topic that you would like us to discuss, please let Father John know.** Mark your calendars and be part of this wonderful activity that will deepen your spiritual journey. **We will meet every other week — topic to be decided at the end of the previous meeting.** Join us. You’ll have a blast, and celebrate your faith along the way..

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, August 22: 21 st Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM Public Mass & Live Stream
Monday, August 23:	4:15 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Tuesday, August 24: St. Bartholomew	NO MASS
Wednesday, August 25:	4:15 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Thursday, August 26:	4:15 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Friday, August 27: St. Monica	NO MASS
Saturday, August 28: 22 nd Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM Public Mass & Live Stream
Sunday, August 29: 22 nd Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM Public Mass & Live Stream

LOVING IN THE RIGHT WAY:

The things and people we cling to imprison us; the things and people we love free us. The most liberating experience of all is to love something or someone and not at the same time want to control the object of our love. True love allows the other his or her own freedom; yes, even desires that freedom; and in return the lover is free to love more and more selflessly. If I am willing to love you and let you go whenever and wherever you wish, we are both free and our love grows. Otherwise, need and dependence replace love, and we grow tired of what all of this is costing us emotionally. Some learn this basic fact of life, and they become the saints we all know. Others never do learn it, and they are constantly caught in webs of their own making, unable to break loose and enjoy the freedom of the children of God.

—Murray Bodo, OFM

REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

The closest we get to true freedom is trusting God. And that is the closest we get to doing or living God’s “will”. Having trust in something — or especially somebody — is a quite selfless act. Trusting can be the last resort after trying other options which may have failed. To have faith in another is a wonderful present of love. Faith and love are so similar that they are the same leap.

In the First Commandment we are invited to “love God”. This is the prime relational request, but loving God usually does not have the same emotional surroundings as loving spouses, family, and friends. Loving God is trusting within this context of doubts; it is a great act of freedom. It is not experienced easily. We are so insecure, frightened, and self-absorbed. God is so loving that God’s will is not something we might “find or not”. If that were true, we’d never know if we were or were not doing it. God invites us to trust our senses and mental capacities, and then do something in actions of trust and love.

Joshua [24:1-18] is preparing to have a great farewell celebration. He begins by telling the people of Israel to follow the laws and customs of their covenantal relationship with the Lord. God has been fighting against the enemies of the Israelites — now the land is their own. Joshua relates specifically the history of the Lord’s care for Israel. There have been many great people and events that have brought them to this moment. All of this demands a response on the part of the people.

Based on all that the Lord has done for Israel, which way will they choose? The Israelites have been invited to look backwards through their national history to see God’s goodness to them. Now Joshua is asking them about their looking forward. Joshua — as Moses’ replacement — declares that he and his folks choose the Lord. The people reply that they too know their history, and they are sticking with the winner who has made them victorious themselves.

In John’s Gospel [6:60-69], we reach the great conclusion of the discussion about Jesus being the “Bread of Life”, and his being the one “sent”. Some of His disciples find these words offensive to their senses — it boggles their minds. They cannot stay; they leave and return to their former ways of seeing, thinking, and believing. They did see the miraculous distribution of bread and fish and ate their fill. Their senses told them something they could grasp. Jesus stretches their minds and asks them to be as open to something even more miraculous, but it goes beyond the information provided by the senses. They choose the path of the “flesh”, while Jesus is inviting them to walk the walk of the Spirit. They stumble over what they cannot see or imagine.

Many leave, but some stay — including Peter. So, Jesus puts the big question to them and him: “Do you also want to leave?” As with Joshua, Peter professes that they have seen enough to trust what they cannot see with the eyes of their “flesh”.

Peter’s assent to Jesus concludes a section in John’s Gospel which is called the “Book of Signs”. In this section are various “sense-based” encounters — water becoming wine, the blind and lame being healed as well as bread being multiplied. There is evidence — but just enough — to allow the act of believing to be made freely; but everyone is free to not believe also. Why do some believe and others just leave? Jesus tells us that the “spirit” draws some and the “flesh” attracts others.

Each day most of us encounter a miraculous amount of data, facts, records, pictures, and collections on the internet. You may even grow impatient as you search when something does not come up immediately, or you have to click a few more times. Smart phones, iPhones, iPads and notebooks — these all allow us to take a great amount of this anywhere we go with maps in our palms and lights to make sure we get there even in the dark. When you travel, you can phone or text those whom you left behind to tell them you are safe, and to check if there is anything “new”.



PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Bob Heltzel [anniversary]
- For Dee Pipik, friend of Gilmour’s Music Director, Andy Andino.
- For Joyce Smith, sister of Track Coaching Associate, Jim Chappelle.
- For Rose Fantelli.
- For Mike Hiscar.
- For Barbara Ann Fontecchio.
- For Jack Bouhall
- For Ken Kalinaski
- For Barry Livingston, father of Learning Specialist, Katie Wetherbee, and David [‘90] Livingston, and father-in-law of Katy Oviatt Livingston [‘89]
- For Alice Stern.
- For Dick Csongei
- For Charles Semarjian, grandfather of Austin [‘12] and Madison [‘15] Semarjian
- For Richard Wamsley [‘53].
- For Jon Knight, father of Matt [‘90] and Heather [‘92] Knight, and brother-in-law of Mike [‘68], Vincent [‘70], Jim [‘76], Timothy [‘77], Chris [‘81], and Greg [‘81] Castrigano.
- For Daniela DiSanto, step-sister of Thomas DeCicco [‘24]
- For Joseph Toth, father of Jeffrey [‘84, James [‘86] Toth and Jennifer [‘94] Papeczun, and grandfather of Timmy [‘24] and Kate [‘27] Papeczun
- For Jeffrey Sadlowski, brother of retired after-care specialist, Kathy Lipowski., and brother-in-law of former maintenance person, Dan Lipowski.

CHAPEL ENVELOPES:

Over the course of COVID-19, many people have been mailing in donations to the chapel. Now that we have begun to assemble again, many are also looking to replace their envelope supply. We really appreciate this, as our collections are obviously way down. **If you would like us to send you a supply of envelopes, please call Father John or Patty at [473-3560], and we will get them right out to you..**

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Thank you to those who have begun to send in weekly offerings. We really appreciate it. Here are the offerings that we have received throughout **the week prior to July 18-19.** Thanks for not forgetting about us.

Offerings-----[week of July 31]-----[paypal]-----	\$ 0.00
Offerings-----[week of August 1]-----	\$ 1,057.00
Offerings-----[week of August 7]-----[paypal]-----	\$ 0.00
Offerings-----[week of August 8]-----	\$ 964.00

THE ETERNAL STRETCH:

For many of us, our faith has consisted in very few choices. Brought up Catholic, we've simply stayed in that configuration of beliefs our whole life. We've never experienced a compelling reason to change anything. Yet the authors of Scripture presume that there are times when we're forced to choose between at least two alternative ways of living that faith.

Joshua presents his people with the basic choice of the Hebrew Scriptures — do we follow “pagan gods,” or imitate Joshua and his family, opting to make God our personal God, and relinquish allegiance to any other gods or goddesses? [Joshua 24:1-18]. We who grew up after the sixth century BCE have only one God to worry about. But those, like Joshua, who lived before Isaiah's ministry, had hundreds of divine beings from which to choose. For them, biblical faith was much more complicated than just being a “believer” or an atheist.

John's Christian community is also faced with a choice. The late Raymond Brown's Book, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* meticulously outlines the alternatives. They spring from the distinction between “low and high Christology.” The former looks at the biblical Jesus from his human characteristics; the latter, his divine. If one decides to preach on Jesus' humanity, one normally goes to Mark, Matthew and Luke — low Christology evangelists. Those who preach on his divinity usually turn to John, a high Christology proponent.

John clearly paints a divine, high Christology picture of Jesus. One with God, he offers an everlasting food and drink that guarantees eternal life [see John 6]. His message actually is “Spirit and life.” No wonder some “old time” Christians found all this new stuff hard to accept. They simply could “no longer accompany” that kind of Jesus [John 6:60-69].

Looking at our biblical writings historically, we frequently find ourselves in the middle of an evolving faith — a constantly moving experience. We not only must know what was said, but when, or in what order it was said. Lots of decisions were involved in forming the Scriptures we have today. The historical Jesus, for instance, decided at one point to reject this-life-only theology of most of his theological predecessors and accept the novel eternal-life theology of his fellow Pharisees. The Sadducees he encountered during his ministry refused to make that jump. They argued that believing in a heaven simply created too many complications, exemplified by multiple marriages.

That's where Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus comes in. Whether we like it or not, it forces us to make a decision. Do we follow this Pauline disciple's marriage theology, or go beyond it [see Ephesians 5:21-33]? We've already done this with Paul's theology on slavery [see 1 Corinthians 7:23; Colossians 3:22 and 4:1]. No one today would tolerate slavery just because of the Apostle's limited reflection on the subject. In the same way, should modern women be “subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord” just because the author of Ephesians said to do so 2,000 years ago? We could employ other biblical quotes to challenge that statement — men and women are created equal and in God's image and likeness [see Genesis 1:27].

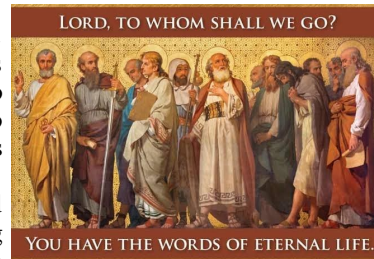
As I mentioned above, Sadducees wanted to live a “simple” life. That's one of the reasons they rejected belief in an afterlife. Do some Christians reject marital equality today just because they also long to live a simple life? Choices can bring complications. Yet in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures we surface a God who has given us free will. Perhaps the more we use that will, the more we actually become like the God we're trying to imitate, a very complicated being.

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

LIVE LIFE:

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.

—Maya Angelou



Faith of any kind and trust in anybody has been injured by our increased reliance on technology. We desire to the point that we almost demand to see the replay before the play. Signs lead only to wanting clarity and conviction. In many ways, we have to admit that faith in the “beyond” or “transcendent” or “God” was more a part of a past time when night was dark, trails and roads led “out there”, and signs were both indicators and invitations to continue.

God continues to offer us invitations. These “signs” are invitations to trust, but they can also be taken as nothing more than non-“sense” and not be followed. There are signs that can indicate there is no God, that religion is absurd, and the Church an “opiate of the people”. Belief is a non-sense experience, in a sense. Faith is a human way of responding to what we sense, but our senses can take us only to the threshold where the signs say: “Go beyond!”

Living with and through faith is not an easy way to go. We rely on the Spirit of God to draw us beyond what we can see, taste, touch and reason. For us, it is the way we desire to go against our technological security-centered human inclinations.

In his life, Peter had seen enough — but let's also remember that it was not enough that he did not also stumble along the way. Maybe we all need to turn off our computer, the lights, the phones, the radio, the TV, and try to believe that there is life without them all.

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

FREEDOM:

“Freedom” is a word central to the Bible. Freedom means the power to decide, to make a choice. The Scripture readings for this 21st Week in Ordinary Time are all about freedom. Joshua tells the Israelites: “Decide today whom you will serve” [Joshua 24:1-18]. St. Paul tells husbands they have to make a decision: Are you going to love your wife? He's not speaking so much about an emotional, romantic love; rather, Paul tells husbands to love their wives like Christ loves the Church — to last drop of his blood [Ephesians 5:21-33]. In John's Gospel, Jesus confronts us with greatest choice of all: “Do you also want to leave me?” [John 6:60-69].

God has given us freedom — a great gift, but also a bit scary. Pope Benedict said: “Freedom, we can say, is a springboard from which to dive into the infinite sea of divine goodness, but it can also become a tilted plane on which to slide towards the abyss of sin and evil.” Pope Benedict spoke these words to a group whose freedom was severely restricted — the boys and girls of Rome's prison for minors. No matter how limited you feel, God has given the gift of freedom. You can use it as springboard or it can become a titled plane to slide into the abyss. Decide today.

In addressing his disciples Jesus makes it clear that the decision comes down to something very concrete — the Eucharist itself. These past weeks we have been hearing Jesus say: “I am the Bread of Life, whoever comes to me will never hunger. The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. For my flesh is true food and my blood true drink.” Is this your faith? Faith is a gift — “No one can come to me,” says Jesus, “unless the Father draws them.” You have the gift of faith in Jesus — his true presence in the Eucharist.

To believe is to make a choice. Are you going to live that faith? Will we worship Jesus in the Eucharist? Will you will approach Communion with reverence? Will you spend time before Jesus, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament? Things like adoration usually get off to a great start, but people soon fall away. People, when they make their first Holy Communion, do so with great reverence and joy, but soon the novelty wears off, and we “just come up to receive”.

Ask yourself the real question: “Do you also want to leave me?” You do have a choice. Peter responded: “Master, to who shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.” How do you want to answer it?

—taken from the writings of Father Phil Bloom., which appear on the internet.

FAITH — A PERSONAL COVENANT WITH GOD:

The gift of eternal life is NOW — it does not begin after we die. In faith we can live without fear — “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me” [Psalm 23:4]. The saints of every age witness to the reality that faith is participation in the joy, the prayer, the gratitude of Christ’s life now — “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus” [1 Thessalonians 5:16–18].

Each time we come to the Eucharist, we are reminded that the Risen Lord is present among us sacramentally as the bread of life given by the Father — both in Word and in Sacrament. But too many of us may be inclined to murmur: “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” [John 6:60-69]. While we can’t go and ask the people of Jesus’ time why they refused to believe, we do know the countless factors in our own culture that dissuade us from giving ourselves to the Lord in faith. Suffering is often experienced as incompatible with God’s love. Our “subjective-value” culture reduces faith to no more than “religious preference.” Nobel Prize winners tell us there is no God. There are likewise moral decisions that lead to belief or away from belief.

After her lecture at a university, a student asked Flannery O’Connor how he could be certain that God exists. Flannery replied: “Give alms.” Jesus himself said: “How can you believe, when you accept praise from one another and do not seek the praise that comes from the only God” [John 5:44]? Faith is not primarily an assent to a creed about God, but a personal covenant with God. Like friendship, faith is mutual self-giving; it can become stronger or become weaker; it can begin and it can end. Jesus emphasizes the radically personal nature of faith by using the word “betray” and by asking whether the Twelve will also decide “to leave” him. Jesus knows that the human commitment of faith is not so steadfast as God’s commitment. He knows that his refusal to let the people make him king [John 6:15] and Judas’ love of money [John 12:6] will lead to a loss of faith in him and to betrayal. In the Last Supper Discourse Jesus knows that the faith of his followers will be tested again — not by his teaching as in the synagogue at Capernaum but by his death on a cross.

“Do you believe now? Behold, the hour is coming and has arrived when each of you will be scattered to his own home and you will leave me alone” [John 16:31–32]. His followers of weak faith did leave him — Judas betrayed him, Peter denied that he had ever known him. The story of Judas and Peter is both a warning and a source of hope. Like Judas, we too can finally choose to place ultimate, suicidal trust in something other than God. Like Peter, we too may grievously sin; yet trust that if we return, the Lord will welcome us with the joy of steadfast love.

—taken from the writings of Father Campion Gavalier, O.S.B., which appear on the internet.

NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:

We have two booklets with the Novena to Blessed Basile Moreau. There is a blue booklet which is used when one is praying for a personal intention or healing; there is a gold booklet which is used when you are praying for the intention or healing of someone other than yourself. The Novena was composed by Father Thomas Looney, C.S.C. Many have received blessings and healings through the intercession of Blessed Basile Moreau, and now we want to extend this invitation to you and your family to join in prayer through the intercession of Blessed Basile Moreau. Please see Father John and he will be glad to give you the booklets.

MERCY:

6 Mercy is a compassionate understanding of another’s unhappiness.

—Bishop Fulton Sheen

infinite and our minds are finite. Infinity, by definition, can never be circumscribed. That might sound abstract, but it is not. For example: try to imagine the highest number to which it is possible to count? Instantly you realize that this is an impossible task because numbers are infinite and there is always one more. It is impossible to conceive of a highest number. This is even truer in terms of any imaginative picture we try to form of God and of how we try to imagine God’s existence. God is infinite and infinity cannot be captured or imagined inside of any finite thought.

This is important to understand, not in order to safeguard some theoretical point, but for our understanding of faith. We tend to identify a weak faith with a weak imagination, just as we tend to identify atheism with the incapacity to imagine the existence of God.

Imagine, for example, two different scenarios in your life: In the first instance, you have just experienced a religious high. Through prayer or some other religious or human experience, you have a strong, imaginative sense of God’s reality. At that particular moment, you feel sure of God’s existence and have an indubitable sense that God is real. Your faith feels strong. You could walk on water!

Then imagine different moment: you are lying in your bed, restless, agitated, feeling chaos around you, staring holes into the darkness, unable to imagine the existence of God, and unable to think of yourself as having faith. Try as you might, you cannot conjure up any feeling that God exists. You feel you are an atheist.

Does this mean that in one instance you have a strong faith and in the other you have a weak one? No. What it means is that in one instance you have a strong imagination and in the other you have a weak imagination. Faith in God is not to be confused with the capacity or incapacity to imagine God’s existence. Infinity cannot be circumscribed by the imagination. God can be known, but not pictured. God can be experienced, but not imagined.

Nicholas Lash, in a deeply insightful essay on God and belief, suggests that the God that atheists reject is very often precisely an idol of our imaginations — we need do no more than notice that most of our contemporaries still find it “obvious” that atheism is not only possible, but widespread, and that, both intellectually and ethically, it has much to commend it. This might be plausible if being an atheist were a matter of not believing that there exists “a person without a body” who is eternal, free, able to do anything, knows everything” and is the proper object of human worship and obedience, the creator and sustainer of the universe.” If, however, by “God” we mean the mystery, announced in Christ, breathing all things out of nothing into peace, then all things have to do with God in every move and fragment of their being — whether they notice this and suppose it to be so or not. Atheism, if it means deciding not to have anything to do with God, is thus self-contradictory and, if successful, self-destructive.

Thomas Aquinas wrote famously that God is self-evident in himself — though not self-evident to us. An Oblate confrere of mine has a less-philosophical way of expressing this. He is fond of saying: “God, as I understand Him, is not very well understood.” That’s true for all of us, in ways much deeper than we imagine.

When the prophet, Isaiah, glimpsed God in a vision, all he could do was stammer the words: Holy, holy, holy! Holy is the Lord God of hosts! [see Isaiah 6:2]. But we misunderstand his meaning because we take “holy” in its moral sense — that is, as virtue. Isaiah however meant the word in its metaphysical sense — namely, as referring to God’s transcendence, God’s otherness, God’s difference from us, God’s ineffability. In essence, Isaiah is saying: other, completely different, utterly ineffable, is the Lord God of hosts!

Accepting that God is ineffable and that all of our thoughts and imaginative constructs about God are inadequate helps us in two ways — we stop identifying our faith with our imagination, and, more importantly, we stop creating God in our own image and likeness.

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



SCANDALOUSLY ORDINARY:

We probably share a lot with the sincere, vacillating Israelites Joshua called together [Joshua 24:1-18]. Joshua called for a take-it-or-leave-it commitment — “Choose either the God who brought you through the desert or the attractive gods that surround you.”

The people swore: “Far be it from us to forsake the Lord!” But doggone it, they hadn’t really grasped the radicality of the choice. Joshua demanded that they pledge absolute commitment to God of the Exodus — the God about whom they had complained in the desert, the God who required them to leave the known behind to follow a hope for which they had no proof, the God whose commands they ignored again and again over the course of 40 years. Their other option was to serve gods they could make in their own image — gods of manipulation and materialism, gods of power and might.

The people swore their choice. From then on, they would try and often fail at fulfilling their promise. In the process, they would gain saving knowledge; they would learn that their forgiving God only wanted them to try to give it their all. Their desire to love, their frequent repentance and conversion, would define them in God’s eyes more than all their failures.

The God Joshua spoke for was also the God of Jesus. People had difficulty with Jesus because he did not fit their concept of God and holiness. He was too simple, too weak — too much like them. Although they probably could not have articulated it exactly this way, Jesus appeared too unimposing to claim to be the one sent by God as the new “bread come down from heaven.” Jesus was scandalously ordinary, except in how he loved God and made God’s love available to others.



It seems that Jesus understood why people rejected him better than they did themselves. Knowing where it would all lead, he questioned them: “If the claim that I came from God shocks you, what will happen when you see me ascend to where I was before?”

In John’s Gospel, Jesus’ being raised up implied the cross, the most disappointing, confusing, tragic, idol-smashing image of God any world religion has ever presented. But that was what Jesus offered. He said: “I am the bread of life. Those who accept and believe in me — in my sacrifice, in my weakness and in my suffering — can receive the life I offer.”

Indeed, this saying is hard. Neither Jesus’ words nor his deeds portray a mighty God who manipulates history or attempts to force belief via miracles or threat of punishment. The God of Jesus — the God present in Jesus — nourishes and gives life like bread does. One must receive it. God’s love and spirit are available to those who ask, God never imposes. Jesus represented and brought others into contact with the God who invited them into an exchange of love that leads to total self-giving on both sides.

In the long run, this God can seem more frightening than the gods of power and might. This God cannot be tamed with sacrifices or long, loud prayers. This God wants nothing less than everything we are and offers nothing less than God’s own self.

This is far more than we can take in. Thus, this God offers to come to us through simple signs like bread. With each Communion, we renew the radical choice to accept and reciprocate God’s offer of love. The more we understand it, the more we know we will not live up to it. But rather than retreat, we say with Peter: “To whom shall you go? You have the words of eternal life.”

—taken from the writings of Sister Mary McGlone, C.S.J., which appear on the internet

ATHEISM AND BELIEF:

God’s ways are not our ways! There is more truth to that than we normally think. God is ineffable. What that means is that God cannot be captured in our thoughts or pictured inside our imaginations. This truth is one of the first things that the church affirms in its understanding of God — defining as a dogma at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 that God is so metaphysically different from anything we can know that we can’t imagine that all of our concepts and language about God are always more inadequate than adequate. God can be known, but never imagined or captured in a thought.

Why can we never form a picture of God or speak about God in adequate ways? Because God is

THE GOD OF CHOICES:

If you have ever read a book on parenting, you know the power inherent in presenting choices to a child. No matter the method or style, most childrearing gurus worth their salt will tell you that raising kids is all about helping them handle choices. Their life, after all, will surely be full of important ones — large and small — and the parent who seeks to shelter a child from making his own choices is living in denial of that inevitable future.

Our God is no different. He is the ultimate father — which is precisely what sets Him apart from false deities. God lets us choose Him. He does not trick us. He does not lie in wait. He does not blackmail or entrap us. He has all the strength in the universe, but He does not use an ounce of it to force us to do anything. His authority over us is the kind that never chafes, because it is entirely divorced from the concept of power. The choice to obey is ours.

In fact, at the single most important moment of salvation history — the Incarnation — He even gave Mary a choice. The salvation of humanity hung upon the decision of a teenage girl to obey the will of God, but still, He did not force it upon her — he gave her a choice.

Ironically, it is the devil who doesn’t seem to want to give us a choice — probably because he knows that if we had a choice — a real and fair choice — we would never decide to be separated from the love of our Creator, the only One in whom our restless hearts can ever find rest. It is the devil who wins souls through deceit and coercion, who preys on feelings of desperation, isolation, and confusion.

In John’s Gospel, we see many of Jesus’ disciples reject him because they could neither understand nor accept the teaching about eating his flesh and drinking his blood [John 6:60-69]. Instead of mocking, chastising, or berating them, Jesus instead shows gentleness, and asks his remaining disciples if they, too, wish to leave.

There was a time in my life when I thought that perhaps I would be happier without religion. I was plagued by doubts. I was tired of fighting them, and tired of this idea that because I submitted to religion, I was not “making my own choices.” I wanted to be the one in charge. I wanted to be the head of my own destiny. I didn’t want to rely on this God I wasn’t sure I could trust. I wasn’t sure I liked or understood the rules He had and thought I might be the first human in history to figure out some better ones.

But in the end, I realized that by believing in God and following His laws, I had indeed been making my own choices. I had never been enslaved; quite the opposite, I had been exercising my free will. Christ had been asking me all along, the same as he did with Simon Peter: “Do you also want to leave?”

And the message I heard coming from deep within myself was the same one that sprang from the lips of Simon Peter in response to Christ: “Master, to whom shall I go? Only you have the words of eternal life.”

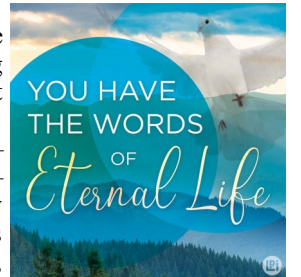
—taken from the writings of Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman, which appear on the internet.

EUCHARIST:

Eucharist is presence encountering presence — mutuality and vulnerability. There is nothing to prove, nothing to protect, and nothing to sell. It feels so empty, naked, and harmless, that all you can do is be present.

The Eucharist is telling us that God is the food and all we have to do is provide the hunger. Somehow we have to make sure that each day we are hungry, that there’s room inside of us for another presence. If you are filled with your own opinions, ideas, righteousness, superiority, or sufficiency, you are a world unto yourself and there is no room for “another.” Despite all our attempts to define who is worthy and who is not worthy to receive communion, our only ticket or prerequisite for coming to Eucharist is hunger. And most often sinners are much more hungry than the “saints”

—unknown



CHOOSING A LIFE OF CRIME:

Do we follow Christ out of obligation or out of self-interest? It's surprising to note that we follow Christ for both reasons. Christ is our Master and Lord, and so the things that he teaches us are things that we as disciples are obliged to obey. Yet, we would be seriously misled to imagine that the teachings of Christ are some arbitrary set of rules set out to measure our fidelity. Christ's teachings are not some hurdle that we are meant to jump over or some obstacle that we are meant to get around. In fact, the very things that Christ asks us to do are the means to goodness and joy. Christ does not direct us to do one thing or another just to make our lives difficult, but rather so that we might become whole and healthy people. The teachings of Jesus are given to us for our own good.

When I was in the fifth grade my teacher was Sr. Philomena, and she had a very strong interest in promoting the scapular. I don't know if all of you know what a scapular is. It is a religious article that you wear like a medal, but it's made out of cloth in order to mirror the habit of a religious brother or sister. There are different kinds of scapulars, but Sr. Philomena was particularly attached to the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. She told us that Mary had promised St. Simon Stock that those who wore the scapular would never die without first having access to a priest who could hear their confession and forgive them of their sins.

So, with this information, my good friend Henry Bockal and I came up with a plan. Very contrary to the intentions of Sr. Philomena, Henry and I decided, we would wear the scapular and live lives of crime! We figured that we could lie and cheat, we could be unkind and tease all the girls in our class, we could steal what we needed from the store, disobey our parents, and indulge our every desire. Yet because we wore the scapular we would know that before we died we could confess all our sins and go straight to heaven. It seemed like a very good plan at the time. But from my viewpoint today it was flawed on several levels. First of all, it treated the scapular like some kind of magical token. Second, it certainly abused the whole notion of the sacrament of penance. But perhaps its most fundamental flaw was the presumption that living lives against the teachings of Jesus would somehow make us happy. We imagined that if we were criminals and selfish — indulging our every desire — we would have a fuller and better life. We thought that we were clever by finding a way to avoid those things that seemed so difficult, but we were totally ignorant of the fact that the very teachings which we sought to avoid were given to us precisely to lead us to happiness and joy.

This is the big insight of Peter in John's gospel. When the other disciples left Jesus because they thought his teaching was too difficult and Jesus asked whether they should want to go also, Peter responded: "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" [John 6:60-69]. What Peter was really saying was that there is no choice. You could find a way of living that asks less of you, but you could not find a way of living that offers more to you. The very things that Christ asks us to do are for our own benefit. Avoiding them does not in the long term make sense. It is not in our own self-interest.

This is something I think we should keep in mind as we live this week, as we make decisions in the future. Is it at times difficult to love others, to place their interest and good before our own, to be flexible and willing to compromise, to be generous with our time and resources? Of course, it is difficult. But being unkind, being selfish, being ungenerous, is not going to bring us joy. The deepest joy in life is in knowing that we can love and are being loved in return — that we are kind and generous persons. That is what will make us happy and that is why Christ commands it.

Is it difficult to forgive, to put hurts behind us and move on with life? Of course, it is. But refusing to forgive is not going to bring us freedom. It will only assure us slavery to our anger, to our hurt and resentment. Forgiving another is in our own self-interest and that is why Christ commands it. Is it



senses, but he knew with his heart that all was beautiful with Jesus and that it would be infinitely foolish to trust in the senses rather than trust in the Lord. As Jesus reminds us: "It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is to no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life."

We are called to believe in the Lord — to trust in Him. We are called to stay on the floating island of faith rather than to trust in our own ability to make sense of the world. We are called to give an infinitely greater credence to the spiritual we cannot see over the material we can see. We are called to faith.

It is quite normal for us to go through periods of doubting the teachings of the Lord. It is normal for us to ask: "How is God only one, if the Father is God, the Son is God and the Spirit is God?" It is quite normal for us to ask: "How can Jesus be both fully God and fully man?" It is quite normal for us to ask: "How can this bread and wine — material objects before the Mass — now be the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ?" It is quite normal for us to want to stand on the material world of our senses and ignore the new world of the spiritual.

When these types of doubts come to our mind, be they flashing through, or lingering and challenging us, we need to stop and consider the Gifts of the Lord. We need to reflect on our Savior, Jesus Christ. We reflect on the wonders He provides that are beyond our imagination, too good to be true, but, yes, they are true. We are children of God. We think about the peace that we have when we are united with Him and the chaos we have when we turn from Him. And, so, we trust completely in the Lord. We trust Him over our own senses. We trust that floating on the island of faith is infinitely better than standing on the material ground of physical senses. For what else can we do? Where else can we go? He alone has the words of eternal life.

And so we believe. We believe in that which we do not see. We believe in that which our human senses cannot reveal. We believe in the Lord, in His Love, and in His teaching. We believe that God exists for eternity in a Trinity of Persons. We believe that the Second Person of this Trinity became man to restore the spiritual to the physical, to restore man to his rightful place in the spiritual world, and we believe He gave us His Body and Blood, the Eucharist, as both an intimate sharing in His Presence and a union of all believers into the eternal swell of His love.

And we come to Mass every week and we pray as we pray every day of our lives, the prayer of the father of the epileptic boy: "Do you believe" [Mark 9:24]? We join this man and pray: "I do believe, Lord, but help those parts of me that do not believe." We are human, yes, but we have been entrusted with the mystery of the Divine. We have been given the Gift of the Eucharist.

Floating on the island of faith is infinitely superior to clasp the deadly limitations of life without God, the limitations of the physical. When we float on the island of faith, we experience deeper and deeper revelations of God's Love. Sure, we are tempted to trust only our senses. We are tempted to stand on the material. We are tempted to limit ourselves to the here and now. We are human. But we are also spiritual. And deep within us, deep within every single one of us there is the Voice of Faith prodding us to exclaim with Peter: "I will not leave you Lord. You alone have the words of eternal life."

Today we pray — as we do every day — for faith.

—taken from the writings of Monsignor Joseph Pellegrino which appear on the internet

EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS:

We are currently discerning a new group of Eucharistic Ministers who would undergo training within the next month. If you feel that the Lord is calling you to this ministry, we would be delighted to include you in that ministry here at Our Lady Chapel. Both adults and teens [must be going into Senior year of High School] are welcome to participate in this very special ministry. We are need of ministers for both our Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses. **Contact Father John or the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you feel called to this ministry.** We are always in need of Eucharistic Ministers.



FLOATING WITH THE LORD:

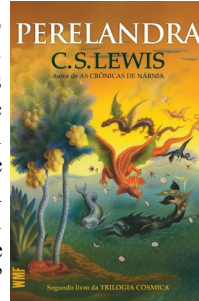
In the second book of his science fiction trilogy, *Perelandra*, C. S. Lewis presents a Paradise being tempted by evil. But instead of painting a lush Garden of Eden as the Book of Genesis paints, C. S. Lewis presents a planet with a huge sea on which there are floating islands. The waves on that planet are so large that the floating islands go up and down with the swell. Sometimes an entire island is on the bottom of the swell and the ocean is a wall. Anyone on the island would not be able to see anything other than the island or the sea. Sometimes an entire island is on top of the waves, and an inhabitant of the island could look out and see the world just as someone here on earth might see the world from the top of Pike's Peak or Mount Everest. Everything on Perelandra is beautiful. There are dolphin-like fish in the sea that spout water the colors of the rainbow. The floating islands are lush and green. The fruit on the islands is so delicious that the first inclination one has after he or she takes a bite, is to eat some and then pick and hoard as much as possible.

An explorer from earth named Ransom lands on one of the islands on a trip to what he thinks is Venus. He finds far more than he expected. After adjusting to his island, Ransom notices off in the distant water a human form. As his island floats closer, he sees that it is a woman traveling from island to island on the back of the dolphin-like creatures. She is tall. She is beautiful. And she is green. He would later learn that she was Trindiri — the queen of the planet — and with her husband the King, they are the only human inhabitants. All would seem to be ideal, but then Ransom sees a dragon flying through the skies. He realizes that this wonderful world is under attack by the forces of evil. "Why do you sleep on this floating island?" the dragon calls out to the beautiful green lady. "Because God has told us to trust in Him," she responds. "But you would be much safer if you slept on solid land instead of a floating island," the devil responds. "Look, over there is a continent. It doesn't float — it just sits there. Why do you risk everything trusting in God? You should sleep on solid ground." And so, C. S. Lewis presents the ancient quandary of man — to trust in what he or she sees or to trust in God. To trust in the spiritual which cannot be seen, or to trust in the physical which our eyes can focus on.

I won't tell you the ending of *Perelandra*, because the C. S. Lewis trilogy is worth reading and reflection. Instead, I want you to consider this: In John's Gospel, the disciples of the Lord are presented as on a Perelandra. They loved hearing the words of the Lord. They loved experiencing the warmth of His Presence. They had just eaten bread He multiplied. They had seen Him heal people. They had heard about His Kingdom. What was even better, they had heard Him call them to be leaders in His Kingdom. But now Jesus had given them a teaching that demanded their absolute trust in Him, their absolute faith in Him, even though this teaching was completely against what their eyes, ears and senses were telling them [John 6:60-69]. He told them that He was the Bread of Life. He told them that they needed to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood for them to have eternal life.

For some of the disciples, this was too hard to accept. They left the island of trust. They were convinced that the spiritual would not make such outlandish demands on their senses. They left Jesus and returned to their previous lives. The Twelve told Jesus what was happening. Perhaps they were implying that Jesus tone down His teaching some. Maybe they were just pointing out that the Lord was losing followers.

But the fact is that Jesus was not going to rescind a word. He came to make the spiritual real. He came to bring a reality to the world that was beyond the capacity of man to understand. He came to bring the Gifts of God that were far greater than any person's fondest hopes. Jesus would not compromise the truth. "Will you go, also, Peter," he asks the leader of his Twelve. "Lord, where can we go, you alone have the words of eternal life." And with that confession of faith, Peter stays on the floating island of hope and faith. He did not know with his senses how it is possible for Jesus to give His Body and Blood for the food they would need for the journey to God. Peter did not know with his



difficult to be a person of integrity, to be true to our word, fair to others, responsible to those who belong to us? Of course, it is. But one of the greatest satisfactions in life is to know that we have the respect of others and that we are a person of character. That is what brings us happiness and joy and that is why Christ commands us to be such a person.

What Christ commands us to do, he commands us to do for our own good. Ignoring the teachings of Jesus is not some clever way of avoiding an obligation. It is working against our own self-interest. There really is no other way. If we want happiness, if we want fullness of life and joy, there is no other path to choose. For we believe that Christ has the words of eternal life.

—taken from the writings of Father George Smiga, which appear on the internet

LIVING THE CALL:

Paul gives his Ephesian Church some words of advice: "Watch carefully how you live — not as foolish persons but as wise people — making the most of the opportunity because the days are evil" [Ephesians 5:15-20]. In order to take full advantage of opportunities, we must "try to understand what is the will of the Lord." In discerning the divine will, we should stay sober and with a clear head draw on the wisdom and energy of the Holy Spirit. Common public prayer with hymns and spiritual songs, along with private prayer in our hearts, puts us in touch with the Holy Spirit, who guides our efforts to seize the moment and make the most of our opportunities. For these moments of grace and for all blessings, we should give "thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father."

Our daily lives are filled with opportunities to do God's will by growing spiritually, attending to our neighbors in need, and serving the common good. There are various reasons for failing to take advantage of these opportunities — too busy, too distracted, too self-centered, and too superficial. We may lack some specific knowledge that would alert us to the rich potential of daily opportunities — for instance, we may not realize that ordinary experience has a depth dimension or that life provides a path to holiness. Good Christians may have such an underdeveloped appreciation of the role of the Holy Spirit that they cannot imagine the Spirit at work in their daily activities. It is possible for us to take the simple blessings of life so much for granted that we fail to see them as catalysts for prayers and spiritual growth.

Let us imagine individuals who surmount these obstacles and move forward on making the most of the opportunities encountered on the journey of life. Tim, a busy, hard driving lawyer with multiple demands on his time, could rethink his priorities and find more opportunities to be present for his family. Tina, who often feels underappreciated for her demanding job of raising three kids, could find deeper meaning in her motherly responsibilities by seeing them as her path to holiness. Mark, a faithful Catholic with a strong devotion to Christ present in the Eucharist, could enrich his spiritual life by listening to the Holy Spirit calling him to do more to help persons in need. Mary, who has generally taken for granted her excellent education, successful career and happy marriage, could come to see them as undeserved blessings, a graced insight leading to prayers of gratitude and greater appreciation of the simple gifts of everyday life.

What next step that you could take to do a better job of making the most of the specific opportunities for growth and service that come your way?

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

FINDING OURSELVES:

Use me, God, show me how to take who I am, who I want to be, and what I can do, and use it for a purpose greater than myself.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

HATRED AND FORGIVENESS:

On February 28, 1944, Nazi soldiers broke into the house of Corrie ten Boom and arrested her with her entire family for hiding Jews in their family home. The Nazis sent Corrie and her sister to Ravensbrück concentration camp where Corrie's sister died. Corrie was released from the camp, and made it a mission to travel the world speaking on God's mercy and forgiveness in the face of hatred. One day after giving a talk, a man walked up to Corrie. She recognized him as one of the Nazi soldiers at Ravensbrück concentration camp. This man had treated Corrie as less than human. This man had let her sister die. This same man walked up to Corrie, looked her in the eyes and said: "Will you forgive me?"

Corrie was silent. Standing there she thought forgiveness is not an emotion — forgiveness is an act of the will; but she could not forgive him — he let her sister die. He had done such evil things! At that moment she prayed: "Jesus, help me! I can lift my hand. I can do that much." She lifted her hand and shook his. She said to this former Nazi soldier: "I forgive you, brother! — with all my heart!"

What Corrie chose to forgive seems unforgivable. The reality is we live in a broken world. There are people in our lives who have hurt us; maybe they are continuing to hurt us in some way. There are people who have betrayed us, embarrassed us, treated us so poorly. How can we possibly forgive in the face of such anger? How can we find peace in the middle of such hurt?

Like Corrie, we need God's help to forgive. Christ longs to help us carry the burdens of pain and suffering as He suffered on the cross. Corrie knew that holding on to anger was a recipe for hatred. She knew that this hate was harmful to herself, and to her relationship with God. She knew and witnessed that when people hold onto hate, they die spiritually.

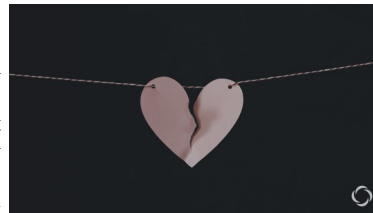
Contrary to all the clichés, forgiving does not mean forgetting. Christ does not want you to just forget about hurt, abuse, injustice and return those same unhealthy situations or relationships. Forgiving doesn't mean pretending that nothing happened. Quite the opposite, forgiveness means accepting and learning from what has happened. It means giving Christ permission to come into the hurt and anger, and to use this suffering for good to happen. God doesn't cause bad things to happen, but He does make beautiful things come out of suffering. Our hurt and anger don't go to waste when we forgive. In fact, when we invite God into this cross our hurt, anger, and sadness are even transformed to help us become the people God calls us to be.

As humans, we are emotional. God gave us emotions as signals to point us to what is important to us. God calls us to look at and understand our hurt and anger. Jesus wept; he got angry; He was emotional. Jesus shows us that our emotions are important and a part of our humanity. One of the first steps to forgiveness is simply recognizing our emotions, and letting God into them. Naming how we are feeling means that we are not a slave to our feelings. Accepting our emotions and realizing that God gives us the ability to work within them gives us options to begin healing.

Like Corrie's story, maybe what has happened in your life seems unforgivable. Maybe there is so much hurt, anger, and pain. Even in the face of suffering, Christ longs to give you peace and freedom that is found in forgiveness. Christ longs to come into your heart and give you the grace to take those small, real steps towards forgiveness today:

Want to want: Honestly, sometimes forgiving someone who has wronged us can seem so out of reach. Often the first step is to just want to forgive the other. When we don't feel like forgiving, we can always pray and first ask God for the desire to forgive itself. We can invite God in by praying: "God, help me to want to forgive this person!" In asking for God's help to begin, we can imagine what forgiveness would look like and begin to take steps towards healing.

Real-time: Forgiveness isn't just a one-time event. It takes time. Forgiveness means being patient and loving to ourselves during this process. When we try to rush healing, we can get mad and



even hateful towards ourselves. It's okay to be angry. Healing is a process of letting God in and letting go of anger. Don't rush it. Trust in God and give Him permission to work.

Write it out: Take your feelings — good and bad, outrage and joy — to paper. Begin to journal about your experiences. What do your experiences mean to you? What have you learned from them? What is God trying to speak to you? Create a prayer journal telling God what is going on inside you. Writing can help get your thoughts out of our heads and can help us process them better. Try to write a letter to someone who has hurt you and don't give it to them. Say whatever you need to say.

Talk to someone: Christ puts people in our lives as His hands and feet. Talk to your Youth Minister, a therapist, your parents, a priest, or a friend. Share how you are feeling and share how these feelings are impacting your life.

Change the focus: Hate is addictive. It's easy to think about hurts and pains over and over, but when we do it weighs us down and weighs others down. Letting God into our anger and hurt means giving it to Him and turning our thoughts to better things. When hate and anger grab your attention, give those negative thoughts and feelings to God and ask Him for help to redirect your focus to better things. Have some good alternative thoughts and activities to do when you find yourself thinking about negative thoughts or memories.

Lift them up: One of the hardest things we can probably do when we are angry is to pray for those who have hurt us. Christ said: "forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us." This step in forgiveness can mean simply lifting up this person to God and His love. It doesn't mean that we have to make a shrine in our prayers for those who have hurt us, but we can simply pray that even those who have wronged us know the love of God. We can entrust them to God's justice and mercy as the King of Kings.

Find the words: Turning to Scripture gives us the words to forgive. The Old Testament reminds us of the unending patience and mercy of God in our own sin. The Psalms give us the words to cry out in our anger and hurt. The New Testament gives us the model to forgive and to let go as Christ did. Scripture as the Word of God reveals to us what it means to be human, to suffer, to forgive. It reminds us of the unending love and forgiveness God pours out. Scripture can be our map to forgiveness — road bumps and all.

Hatred and holding onto anger only eats away at us and pushes us away from God. Christ calls us to true healing and freedom found in forgiveness. Forgiveness isn't pretending that nothing happened — it is saying yes to inviting Him into our hearts and taking real steps to be free from anger and sin.

—taken from the writings of Adam Cross, a Catholic therapist.

LIFE TEEN and EDGE:

Our Life Teen and EDGE youth group is meeting in-person again. We will meet for an hour beginning at 11:30 AM following our 10 AM Sunday Mass in the Lennon Board

Room. If you are unable to join us, there are many resources available for you on the Life Teen website — lifeteen.com. There are numerous blogs and videos for you to connect with. The Life Teen national office continues to release many new programs. **Please contact Father John for more information. And please join us each Sunday for our Mass at 10 AM — in person or live-streamed, and then come to our Life Teen/EDGE gathering after Mass.** And above all, let us continue to join each other in prayer. **Father John is available for you. Please contact him [cell: 216-570-9276].**

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

Father John is available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you. Please call him [440-473-3560] to arrange for this experience. All social distancing will remain in place. Always remember the Lord's invitation: "I will give them a heart with which to understand that I am the Lord. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart". [Jeremiah 24:7].

