

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

**~ An Advent Prayer ~**

Lord God,  
we adore you  
because you have come to us in the past.  
You have spoken to us  
in the Law of Israel.  
You have challenged us  
in the words of the prophets.  
You have shown us in Jesus  
what you are really like.

Lord God,  
we adore you  
because you still come to us now.  
You come to us  
through other people  
and their love and concern for us.  
You come to us  
through men and women  
who need our help.  
You come to us  
as we worship you  
with your people.

Lord God,  
we adore you  
because you will come to us at the end.  
You will be with us  
at the hour of death.  
You will still reign supreme  
when all human institutions fail.  
You will still be God  
when our history has run its course.  
We welcome you,  
the God who comes.  
Come to us now  
in the power of Jesus Christ our Lord.  
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.*

**ADVENT DEVOTIONS:**

Welcome to Advent. On the table in the narthex of the Chapel are several Advent devotionals to assist you in your spiritual journey during this season of Advent. We hope that you will make use of them for you and your family. [1] **The Little Blue Book** with daily readings and devotions. This book corresponds to “The Little Black Book” that is so popular during Lent. [2] The daily scripture devotion, **The Word Among Us**, is available. It lists the scripture passage for the day along with a short reflection on one of the passages.

**ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE:**

On **Monday, December 13<sup>th</sup>**, at **7:00 PM**, we will celebrate our Advent communal **Penance Service**. This service will consist of scriptural reflections by those involved in the Christmas story. There will also be songs and hymns, and a time to straighten the paths of our lives to ease the arrival of our God. Each of us needs to truly hear in our heart the message of John the Baptist: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” The service will last about 45 minutes. There will be an opportunity for individual reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation following the service. Please join us.

**OLC “ADOPT A FAMILY” PROGRAM:**

Again this year, we are going to be doing our Adopt-a-Family Program with St. Adalbert Parish School. **Because of the Pandemic, emphasis this year will be on gift cards. You certainly can purchase a “real” gift if you would like, but we thought it would be safer to do the gift cards and let the parents of the children do the shopping.** The need this year continues to be great because of the pandemic. St. Adalbert has identified families — most often single parent, below poverty level families; we are given the ages of the children and other family information, to help you identify each family’s needs. In addition, if possible, **we ask that you also provide a Christmas food gift card for the family.**



If you are buying gifts, then the gifts should be wrapped. **Gift cards from the following places are best: Walmart, Aldi or Dave’s. Chipotle, Panera, any Pizza place, Amazon, GameStop, Home Goods, Target, Marshall’s, and Old Navy, Dollar Tree, Family Dollar, and Ashley Stewart.**

There are also many **Grandparents who are raising children and need help.** For this group, **Aldi’s Gift Card or Walmart Cards** are the best.

This is a project that the entire family can get involved in! Families can be matched according to your own family size, and children’s ages, etc. Last year it was truly inspiring. **Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560 or szaniszlop@gilmour.org] if you and your family would like to participate in this program, or if you have any questions.**

**Adopt-a-Family gifts will be due by Wednesday, December 15<sup>th</sup>. Thank you!**

**GIVING TREE:**

This year the Giving Tree will continue to look different; the tree will be there, but there will be no ornaments on the tree. **Instead here is a list of gifts to purchase and put under the tree: Gifts need not be wrapped! They can be in grocery bags or other such “outerwear”.** All gifts will be going to **Fatima Center, or to Regent of Euclid Assisted Living.** **We will also be working with Gilmour’s Kids 4 Kids Club to provide gifts for the needy.** Here is a list of the gifts that are needed for Fatima: **New Books, Games, African American Dolls, Toiletries, Gift Cards, Sweaters, Socks & Underwear, Hats and Gloves.** The assisted Living facility needs: **T-Shirts, Fleece Pants, Non-slip Footie Socks, Slippers, Fleece Throws, Sweaters, Socks, Hats, and Gloves, for Men & Women.** Gifts for the student Council outreach will be added shortly.

**Please return your gift to the Giving Tree in the Chapel Lobby by Wednesday, December 15<sup>th</sup>** so that they may be distributed to Fatima and the other organizations for their celebrations. Join in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Christmas spirit by bringing joy into the lives of others.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For John Visconsi, brother of Tom [\*61] and Tony Visconsi [\*75] and Paulette Poklar, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Marty Zingales, who is undergoing further treatment for cancer.
- For Brother Joseph Annan, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for a stroke.
- For Father Joseph O’Donnell, C.S.C., who is under the care of hospice
- For Sheila Coyne, aunt of Katie Coyne [\*24], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Frank Nannicola, grandfather of Cassie [\*17], Frank [\*18], and Mia [\*19] Nannicola, who is recovering from cancer surgery.
- For Bill McGinley, father of Academic Director, Elizabeth Edmondson, and grandfather of Molly [21] and Abbie [\*23] Edmondson, who is undergoing treatment for COVID
- For Anita Yex, who is seriously ill with COVID
- For Joseph Boehm who is critically ill with COVID

**FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Dorothy Dowling, grandmother-in-law of Whitney Daly, great-grandmother of Thomas [\*27], Mark [\*30] and Joseph [\*32] Daly.
- For Father Joseph Cappelletti
- For Brother Robert Fontaine, C.S.C.
- For Marianne Dolinar, mother of Laura Dolinar Hoffman [\*87] and Sean Dlinar [\*91]
- For Melvin Jackson, father of Taylor Jackson [\*07]
- For Rosemary Hurt, mother of William [\*73], Jeff [\*76] and James [\*79] Hurt, grandmother of Julia [\*12] and Jeff [\*13] Hurt
- For Father Edward Leonard, parochial vicar at St. Columbkille Parish in Parma.
- For Peter Rebeiro, brother-in-law of Brother Victor D’Rozario, C.S.C.
- For Danielle Chronister
- For Dave Howard, uncle of Gilmour Art instructor, Susan Southard.
- For John Cortens, uncle of Holy Cross seminarian, Cameron Cortens, C.S.C.

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

- 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.

**FREEDOM FROM FEAR:**

When we drop fear, we can draw nearer to people, we can draw nearer to the Earth, we can draw nearer to all the heavenly creatures that surround us.

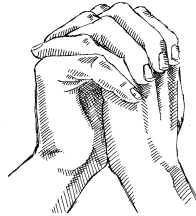
—Bell Hooks

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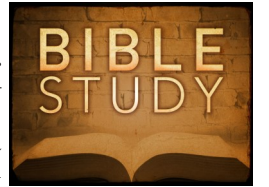
**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For Liam Kirchner, a child, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Brother Dan Kane, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for an infection in his leg.
- For Matt Rose who is recovering from extensive cancer surgery.
- For Andrea Polomsky, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Vicki Giancola, mother of Vince Giancola ['23], who continues treatment for cancer.
- For Joseph Borkey ['82], brother of Jeff ['80] and Jerrod ['87] Borkey, father of Christian Borkey ['16], and uncle of Jerrod ['12] and former Gilmour student, Ian Borkey, who is undergoing treatment for cancer
- For Katie Poelking ['01], sister of TJ Poelking ['98], who is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.
- For Mary Goers who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.
- For Serena DiCillo, daughter of David DiCillo ['84] and Polly Duval DiCillo ['84], and granddaughter of long-time Gilmour teacher, Bonnie DiCillo, and niece of John ['83], Dawn ['86], and Dan ['88] DiCillo and Laurie Duval Muller-Girard ['81], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- 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 David Patterson ['83], brother of Charles ['79] and Neil ['81] Patterson, 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 Darlene Lonardo, mother of Joseph Lonardo ['00], and grandmother of Angelina ['22] and Giana ['22] Lonardo, who is undergoing treatment for leukemia.
- 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 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, 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 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 Chiacchiarri, 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 seriously ill
- For Tom Podnar, father of Lower School art teacher, Eileen Sheehan, who is awaiting a heart transplant.
- For Father James Caddy, former pastor of St. Francis, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.



**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — THURSDAY, DEC. 2<sup>nd</sup>:**

**Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Thursday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 PM.** Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. 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: Advent**



**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, November 28: <b>1<sup>st</sup> Week in Advent</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b> In Person & Live Stream
Monday, November 29:	<b>NO MASS</b>
Tuesday, November 30: <b>St. Andrew</b>	<b>NO MASS</b>
Wednesday, December 1:	<b>4:15 PM</b> [Eucharistic Chapel]
Thursday, December 2:	<b>NO MASS</b>
Friday, December 3: <b>St. Francis Xavier</b>	<b>NO MASS</b>
Saturday, December 4: <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Advent</b>	<b>NO MASS</b>
Sunday, December 5: <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Advent</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b> In Person & Live Stream

**R.C.I.A [Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults]:**

Our RCIA program will begin shortly. If you have been thinking about investigating the Catholic faith, or if you know someone who has been thinking about it; if you have been away from the Catholic Church for a while, or are interested in learning more about the Catholic faith; if you know someone who is not fully initiated [Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation] in their Catholic faith — then consider joining or having them join our RCIA program.



**Please contact Father John [440-473-3560] for more information.**

**ALWAYS REMEMBER:**

In the twilight of life, God will not judge us on our earthly possessions and human successes, but rather on how much we loved.

—St. John of the Cross



**REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:**

We have almost four full weeks of Advent this year. Time is definitely of the essence. Advent invites us to fidelity and not to be fearfully watchful. We do not like waiting. Because of this, Christmas often comes before we have allowed Advent to become the grace that it is. And so, it would be well for us to take to heart these holy hints for living these days of longing.

Have you ever experienced being alone, or being left out — or even being lost? Such experiences are Advent graces. Reflect upon how you have waited for a phone call, or the arrive of a special person, or a anticipated news. If we do not enter into Advent graces, then Christmas might be a celebration of longing rather than arrival.

The Scripture Readings for this 1<sup>st</sup> Week in Advent begin with a message from an imprisoned Jeremiah. He had been prophesying about the calamities that were to befall Judah and Israel. Jerusalem will be invaded by pagans, and will become a wasteland — no person or beast shall dwell there. But yet, hidden within this sadness is a promise that God makes through Jeremiah to all of Israel — it is an advent of life and prosperity. There will be joy, marriages, singing and thanksgiving sacrifices in the temple and new life in the days to come [Jeremiah 33:14-16].

An image of new life springing from the old is used by Jeremiah to predict recovery and God's eternal fidelity. A "shoot" or "branch" will bud from the old stalk of David — the "new" will complete the "old". The future will be as safe and righteous as in former times. This "shoot" will be a man whose ways will be those of King David; this person will bring about peace with justice. Those who longed for past times of prosperity and integrity — who now sit in exile and darkness — hear this with increased longing and hope. Something and someone is worth longing and living for. Someone is coming who will bring total recovery of national and religious stability.

Luke's Gospel [21:25-36] is difficult to hear and understand. The city of Jerusalem is central to the religious sense of the people. Jesus is speaking to His disciples about the total collapse of the city which has been the symbol of God's eternal fidelity. For the city to fall is similar to the sky falling and all natural orderliness being disturbed. The stability of the temple as well as the city itself is similar to the order of the sun and moon, the seas and normal living. As with Jeremiah's prophesy, the Pagans — or more precisely the foreigners — will disturb this order by violating the city. Amid all this turbulence, Jesus encourages His disciples to stand firm because He is the "shoot of David" who will also appear and reestablish order and recovery of identity.

Jesus offers us the encouragement to stand firm against the disorders and tribulations and temptations which lead to disorder. The Man of Justice and Integrity is always coming into the disorderliness of our personal, cultural, and global worlds. It is attractive to spend time interpreting natural and astronomical signs of the coming of the end. Jesus is always inviting us to be attentive to our own dis-attractions, disorders, dis-identities, and thereby watch or be alert to the ways the Son of Man comes to bring back our own sense of integrity.

This first week of Advent invites us to begin preparing for the coming of a Savior into our lives. To do this we are called to check up on the disorders within and around us. Such disorder begins with the acknowledgement that we do not really want a Savior — we want an approver! We do not want a negative judge whom we fear, but an approving and benevolent assessor. Most Christians want to sweep away their past — or present — and hope that the God of Vengeance doesn't see even the carpet under which we have swept our disorders. A second group of Christians wants to pretend that the disorders —

**LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST:**

One of the problems with looking forward to celebrating Christmas in a month is that we often spend a lot of that period looking backward instead of forward. We zero in on past Christmases — trying to replicate the best of them. Without remembering such ideal celebrations, Christmas wouldn't have its proper meaning.

Yet considering it was more than three or four centuries before the feast of Christmas came into existence, that's not the way Jesus' earliest followers celebrated his entering their lives. They were never interested in just forming schmaltzy memories that they could conjure up every year.

Of course, their images of him were different from our own. Given their Jewish background, once his disciples understood him to be the long-awaited Messiah, he was burdened with the "baggage" attached to that title. For instance, we hear Jeremiah telling us that Jesus the Messiah will not only be the one bringing peace to the two Jewish nations of Israel and Judah, he'll also do whatever's just and right for everyone in the land — demonstrating, as a good Jew, how to have the proper relationships with God and those around us.

In the earliest Christian writing we possess — St. Paul's letter to the Church at Thessalonica — Paul couldn't be clearer about those relationships. Having taken the unheard-of step of permitting non-Jews to follow Jesus without first becoming Jews, the Apostle can't encourage his Gentile converts to include Jewish laws and culture in their following of the risen Christ. He can only insist on forming just relationships with Jesus and others. He has no better prayer for his community than: "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you" [1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:3]. Jesus in our lives makes all the difference in our lives.

But his presence also changes the way we look at the future. Luke testifies to that phenomenon in his well-known "apocalyptic" section of his gospel [Luke 21:25-36]. It's significant that this type of literature was the most frequently employed genre in religious writings shortly before and after Jesus' birth. Many would-be sacred authors spoke about the end of the world and the phenomena accompanying it, using esoteric, symbolic language to avoid being sued for breach of promise. Knowing how frequently this genre was utilized, it's amazing only two biblical books — Daniel and Revelation — plus a chapter in each Synoptic gospel, were written in this style.

In some sense, Luke's Gospel is only informing his community about one thing — though many people, not only Christians, are awaiting the world's imminent end, the evangelist only wants Jesus' followers to know that when it finally happens Jesus will play an essential role. When this world as we know it goes down the tubes, followers of Jesus will experience "the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

But Luke is convinced we can't go around with our heads in that cloud just waiting for Jesus' arrival. There's lots to do in the meantime. We can't sit on our hands taking bets on the time of the Parousia, nor risk becoming "drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life." If the world as we know it is going to end with all these distressing signs, we've got to keep in shape, else we'll get bowled over. Staying vigilant will be our main occupation. Jesus' first followers were always warned to get out of the past and appreciate the present and the future — no matter how comfortable and non-challenging their past was. Jesus' coming always means there's more to life than just memories.

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

**HAPPINESS:**

What makes you happy is always right in front of you because what makes you happy is love. Love is willing the good of the other, opening yourself to the world around you. Love is not a feeling. It's an act of the will. It is the great act of dispossession.

—Bishop Robert Barron

**ADVENT — A TIME TO LEARN HOW TO WAIT:**

Carlo Carretto — the renowned spiritual writer — spent many years living alone as a hermit in the Sahara desert. He wrote a number of books from that place of solitude, including one entitled: *Letters from the Desert*. In that book, he has a message for those of us who live busy lives in the world: “Be patient! Learn to wait — for each other, for love, for happiness, for God!”

Learn to wait! That’s not something we do easily, and many of our problems flow from that. We often don’t wait properly for things.

Annie Dillard shares this story about proper waiting. She had been watching a butterfly emerge from its cocoon and was fascinated by the process until she grew impatient with how long it was taking and, to speed things up, took a candle and heated the cocoon — albeit very gently. The experiment worked, but it was a mistake in the long run. The butterfly emerged more quickly; however, because adding heat violated something within the natural process, the butterfly was born with wings too weak to fly. Haste and prematurity had stunted and deformed a natural process. Some things can’t be rushed.

Dillard understood immediately what had gone wrong. A certain chastity had been violated. Impatience had triggered an irreverence that had interfered with and damaged the natural order of things. In essence, the Christmas gift had been opened too early — a process that needed an allotted period of time had been short-circuited. There hadn’t been enough advent.

Advent means waiting. Among other things, it celebrates the idea that the messiah must be born from a virgin. Scripture and Christian tradition emphasize that Jesus was born of a virgin to underscore the fact that he had no human father and also to teach an important truth — namely, that in order for something sublime to be born, there must, first, be a proper chastity, a proper time of waiting, a season of advent.

Why? The answer lies in properly understanding chastity. Chastity is not, first of all, something to do with sex. Chastity has to do with how we experience reality in general. To be chaste is to have proper reverence — towards God, towards each other, towards nature, towards ourselves, towards reality in general.

Lack of chastity is irreverence. And reverence is a lot about proper waiting. We can see this by looking at its opposite — to lack chastity, to be irreverent, is to be impatient, selfish, callous, immature, undisciplined, or boorish in any way so that our actions deprive someone else of his or her full uniqueness, dignity, and preciousness. And we do this every time we short-circuit waiting.

Annie Dillard’s metaphor basically captures it — there is a fault in our chastity when we put a candle to the cocoon so as to unnaturally rush the process. Chastity is about proper waiting and waiting is about patience in carrying the tensions and frustrations we suffer as we live the unfinished symphony that constitutes our lives.

There are some wonderful refrains in apocalyptic literature around the importance of waiting. Before the messiah can be conceived, gestated, and given birth to, there must always be a proper time of waiting — a necessary advent, a certain quota of suffering, which alone can create the proper virginal space within which the messiah can be born.

All of these phrases say the same thing — what’s sublime depends upon first having been some sublimation; a feast can only happen after there has first been some fasting; love can only be a gift if the gift is fully respected; and — as Carretto so poignantly puts it — we must learn to wait — for God, for love, and for Christmas.

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

**SPIRITUAL LONGING:**

Spiritual desire is the longing of the heart for relationship with God that brings happiness and peace



or the need for integrity — do not exist, and they stay alert to their denials. A third group spends their lives obsessed with their doing nothing but what is right; they correct things so that a savior for them is quite unnecessary.

The Savior has come; he is coming again, and will always come. The signs of disorder are all around and within us. Jesus was not born in stableish-poverty because there was no room in the inn only — the poverty is ours, and the inn that is too full is our heart. He can be born anew there only if we stay alert to the signs of disorder within us.

I once had a wonderful African/American friend who lived his whole life in the back-waters of southwest Louisiana. He told me once — with great faith and enthusiasm — that if God did not spend all His time forgiving us, God wouldn’t have anything to do all day. Mr. Lienelle trusted his being found, forgiven and freed. He had lived long years in fear of the “white man” and also of the “white God”, but near his last days, he knew racial — and especially faith — freedom. His honesty about his life allowed him to be more honest about Jesus’ life.

Luke’s Gospel is not asking us to interpret the signs around us concerning the end of time. Rather, Luke is encouraging us to experience the signs within ourselves which indicate disorder; he is asking us to kneel there in the poverty of our truth which will bring us to the richness of His coming always and again. As believers, we are waiting for the “new beginning” rather than an ending.

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

**DO YOU NEED ADVENT?**

Think for a minute about the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas. What thoughts and images come to your mind? — the warmth of family and friends gathered to share food and laughs; determined hours at the office or doing homework with the kids; bargaining with yourself to make it until Christmas break. There are people for whom you plan to buy gifts, detailing what you plan to purchase, what you have budgeted and what you actually spent.

And then — if you stop — you can see a navy blue night sky with one star that shines brighter than all the others. It’s this last image that can pull you from the hurried pace of the secular holiday season into the peaceful purpose of Advent. As the Psalmist says: “Justice shall flourish in his time and fullness of peace forever” [Psalm 72].

Advent is meant to be a time of peace and prayerful preparation for the coming of the Christ Child. Sometimes we forget that Advent is a season at all — with all our thoughts focused on the trappings of Christmas. Do you remember the song, *I Need a Silent Night* sung by Amy Grant? Here’s the chorus: “I need a silent night, a holy night to hear an angel voice through the chaos and the noise. I need a midnight clear, a little peace, to end this crazy day with a silent night.”

What can we do to create that kind of peace in Advent this year for yourself and your family? The answer will differ for each of us. It might be the lighting of the candles of the Advent wreath at dinner each week; it could be shopping for a gift from the St. Vincent de Paul Christmas tree — a gift for someone who is truly in need. Maybe it’s receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation to bring God’s peace and forgiveness to our souls.

**WILLING LOVE:**

Love among people is not first of all a feeling or an emotion or a sentiment, but a decision of the will to be faithful to each other. There are really no people whom we can love with unlimited feelings of love. We are all imperfect, broken, sinful people, but we are able to love one another because we are able to will to be faithful and constantly forgive each other’s unfaithfulness.

—Henri Nouwen





**MAKING ADVENT A TIME OF PREPARATION:**

A lot of things in the Church seem to be upside down — not the least of which is heaven itself which sees the poor and lowly invited to the top seats. The same thing happens during this First Week in Advent — the Church’s New Year’s Day if you like — as we begin with a severe warning from Jesus about the End of the World [Luke 21:25-36]. What is import here is not to become overly concerned with the actual details of the events surrounding the Last Day, lest we get distracted from the real message of Christ. Not every earthquake or great storm is going to be a precursor of the Last Day.

It is amusing to see certain Christian groups which seem to concentrate on these things — they look deep into the corners of the Bible trying to find out what the precise signs of the Last Day will be, and then they try to work out if these signs are present in the world today. Focusing on these signs actually distracts us from the real meaning of the Gospels which is always Good News. It is important when reading the scriptures to always think that what we are reading is actually Good News. Things that might initially sound severe when looked at in this way make a lot more sense.

In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples about some of the cataclysmic events that will happen on the Last Day; He tells them that the Final Day will come unexpectedly and unless we are ready and prepared it will come upon us like a trap. But while his words are meant to be a warning, they also aim to be reassuring — they are intended as Good News. Jesus does not want us to be caught off guard; rather, he wants us to be ready and, as he says, he wants us to be able to stand with confidence on that Last Day. He wants us to be prepared for that final judgment, and unafraid because we will know that having lived good and worthy lives it will be a favorable judgment.

It is important to know the end of the story so that we are always ready for the conclusion whenever it comes. It is vital that we live our lives in the knowledge that we will ultimately face judgment. This helps us to see everything in its true perspective and to realize that we are accountable for our actions during this all too brief life on earth. So there is an important logic in starting at the end of the story. In this season of Advent, we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus by realizing that he comes ultimately as the Savior and Judge of all. With our eyes fixed on heaven so to speak we will avoid being confused by the many distractions that we face as we go through life.

Of course distractions are always going to be with us. There will be many things that preoccupy us and take us off the right track. Besides those things which are obviously sinful — and which run completely contrary to a life of grace — there are other things which might at first glance appear to be very legitimate. But these legitimate concerns can grow out of proportion and distract us from living our lives the way Jesus wants us to.

A good example of this comes in the rearing of children. Yes, it is important to love our children and to be very concerned that they grow up in the proper way. But some parents exaggerate these concerns and make their children objects of worship in themselves. This leads them to spoil their children and do all kinds of things which actually end up being a distortion of proper child rearing. Think about those parents who drive their child to their football game, but who get overly involved — ending up with them shouting at the referee or getting into arguments with other parents for perceived unfairness. They are doing their children a disservice, and actually depriving them from learning a lot of the important lessons in life.

The Season of Advent is about preparation — preparation for the celebration of Christmas, but also and very importantly the preparation of ourselves to meet Christ on that final Day of Days.

Nowadays people often forget about this beautiful liturgical season. Blame it if you will on the consumer society which is already into the full Christmas swing. Advent gets passed over and completely forgotten. Consumer culture has us celebrating Christmas long before we get to it, and then rushes on to the winter sales immediately afterwards. In the world of work, it is a time taken up with Christmas staff

our soul to the God who longs to lead us into salvation. Francis teaches that “humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home.”

This first week of Advent promises that the time of salvation is at hand — if only we will dare to ask for divine help and take responsibility for our boomeranging prayer.

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

**WE ARE EMBODIED SPIRITS:**

Welcome to Advent. We are creatures who search for meaning. As St. Augustine wrote: “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.” In the past year American mental health sank to the lowest point in history — incidence of mental disorders increased by 50 percent, compared with before the pandemic. Alcohol and other substance abuse surged, and young adults were more than twice as likely to seriously consider suicide than they were in 2018. Yet the only group to see improvements in mental health during the past year were those who attended religious services at least weekly — virtually or in-person [46% versus 42% a year ago].

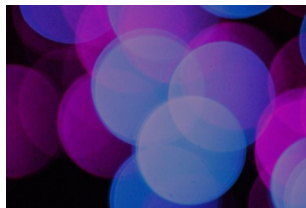
Religion’s role is to help a person find the meaning of life. For us as Christians we discover the purpose of our lives by turning to the Bible and the traditions of our faith. On this first week in Advent, we pray: “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul” [Psalm 25:1]. This is different from our culture’s default view that what we see, feel, touch, etc. — that’s reality. We are just matter in motion and when our bodies die, that’s it!

But we are spiritual beings. We are “embodied spirits.” Jesus indicates that our bodies can both help and hinder us. He says: “when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand” [Luke 21:25-36]. Standing erect and lifting up our eyes is part of turning to God.

But we can get bogged down when we forget about our spirituality — “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap.” The Bible has a vision of the soul governing the body, and God governing the soul. St. Paul tells us to “conduct yourselves to please God” [1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:3]. When we put God in first place, we find inner peace.

As we begin Advent, take the first step to discover God’s purpose for your life. Recapture the plan of God for you — “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.”

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

**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — DECEMBER 18<sup>th</sup>:**

Our Savior Lutheran Church, across the street from Gilmour, has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on **the third Saturday of each month**. They welcome volunteers. If you want to volunteer, they have instituted some **new procedures** because of the Coronavirus. **Thus they help pre-pack nonperishables in bags on Thursday evening beginning at 5 PM.** They continue this prepacking on Friday if needed. Check with Elina Gurney on this. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help putting 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](mailto:gurney.oh@gmail.com).** In this critical time, this is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.



**OUR BOOMERANG PRAYER:**

“To you, O Lord, I lift my soul” [Psalm 25:1]. On this First Sunday of Advent, we sign this Psalm. Do we mean it? As we prepare to celebrate the Incarnation, are we willing to dare to lift our soul — our very selves — in dialogue with God? Are we willing to look at our Earth from the divine perspective?

Often, our prayers sound like a “honey do” list — telling God what should be on the divine agenda for the coming days. How often do we participate attentively in the liturgy’s prayer of the faithful? One of our sisters used to threaten to pray: “Gracious God, let the roof now fall in on our heads....let us pray to the Lord.” She wanted to know how many inattentive pew dwellers would piously reply: “Lord, hear our prayer.” Even if we’re not totally oblivious, many of us still need a good dose of Jesus’ admonition: “Beware! Do not let your hearts become drowsy!” [Luke 21:25-36].

Scripture leads us to discover that prayer is like a boomerang — we launch it, only to have it come back at us. When Jesus told people that their faith had saved them, he was saying that God works through us — but never replacing human effort nor overriding our freedom. Grace is a collaborative affair. Genuine prayer implies that we are ready to do our part to bring about what we ask God to accomplish.

Back to the phrase: “To you, Lord, I lift my soul.” If we awaken our hearts and listen to the power of these words, we might get the message that praying is supposed to lure us to boldly go where we have never gone before. Praying: “To you, Lord, I lift my soul” positions us for flight from everything trivial and egocentric. These words proclaim our readiness to be moved beyond the wishful and limited horizon of our own concerns, into a space that offers new perspectives. We have to travel beyond ourselves to understand and long for what prophets proclaim: “New days are coming!” [Jeremiah 33:14-16]. Jeremiah spoke these words to a people who admitted that their lack of faithfulness had nearly destroyed them. They were desperate for help as they tried to reconstitute themselves after exile. Jeremiah promised that God would raise up prophets and rulers to lead them into justice. Jesus proclaimed a similar message [Luke 21:25-36] — assuring people that the time of their tribulation could also be the time of their salvation.

Today, Pope Francis is telling all of humanity that God still offers a new day — a time characterized by justice and reverence for Earth and all her creatures. Jeremiah, Jesus, and Francis have united to prod us to lift up our soul and awaken to our moment.

Advent is the season of hope. In order to cultivate real hope, we have to admit what is wrong with our world. If we ignore our current predicament, it will control us. As they teach in 12-step programs, we are genuinely helpless until we acknowledge our helplessness. Once we admit our situation, we are on the road to recovery.

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Francis begs us to recognize the desperation of our Earth. He calls us to face the fact that we have compromised the intrinsic dignity of creation and have fallen into an “excessive anthropocentrism,” positioning ourselves as the masters of the world, accountable to no one.

Advent is the season of hope. In order to cultivate real hope, we have to admit what is wrong with our world.

Jesus talked about paying attention to natural signs. Today, unprecedented signs in the universe prove that our situation has become desperate. The sun is more harmful than ever before, the stars are less visible, and the waters of the Earth have wreaked more destruction in a few decades than previous generations witnessed in centuries. Francis tells us that our sister Earth is crying out, pleading with us to change course. He says: “Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years. Yet, we still lack the culture needed to confront this crisis.”

As we begin the season of Advent, we are invited to hear the Scriptures in the light of the signs of our times. Francis wrote *Laudato Si'* to “help us to acknowledge the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we face.” The dual message of ecological catastrophe and divine promise invite us to lift



parties and other celebrations.

Despite the secular world, the Church gives us four weeks of preparation followed by twelve days of celebration. Advent has always been properly seen as a mini-Lent. It is a time of sobriety and stillness; it is a period of reflection and preparation. And it is a time when we use the Sacrament of Reconciliation to help us celebrate Christmas properly with our souls truly brought into relationship with God.

It used to be that Advent Calendars were completely religious. As you progressed through Advent you opened a little window each day to reveal a religious picture or symbol and then when you got to Christmas Day it had a bigger window containing the Nativity scene. Just being able to see a picture of the Baby Jesus was regarded as sufficient reward. Today, however, Advent Calendars are more about chocolate than anything else, instant gratification is their real message.

What we are seeing here is a beautiful liturgical season being devalued and debased by an increasingly secular culture. So I urge you to think about ways to make this season meaningful in your homes. Besides traditional Advent Calendars, there is of course the Jesse Tree which can be made and put up in the home. This would be a good activity to do together as a family involving cutting up paper, drawing pictures and sticking them on a tree. Jesse Trees are also a good way of reconnecting with the Old Testament which is another thing that is easily forgotten in our increasingly secular world. Think creatively this Advent and try to find a way to make it a season that is properly celebrated. That will lead you to a greater appreciation of the true meaning of Christmas.

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

**THE END OF THE WORLD**

In Christian circles, there is great speculation around the promise Jesus made at his ascension — namely, that he would be coming back, and soon, to bring history to its culmination and establish God’s eternal kingdom.

These beliefs were rampant among the first generation of Christians. They lived with this expectation, believing that the world as they knew it, would end before their deaths. As the years moved on and Jesus did not return, their understanding began to evolve so that by the time John’s Gospel is written — probably about seventy years after Jesus’ death — they had begun to understand things differently; they now understood Jesus’ promise that some of his contemporaries would not taste death until they had seen the kingdom of God as being fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit [see John 21:23].

Jesus was, in fact, already back and the world had not ended. And so, they began to believe that the end of the world was not necessarily imminent.

But that didn’t change their emphasis on vigilance, on staying awake, and on being ready for the end. But now that invitation to stay awake and live in vigilance was related more to not knowing the hour of one’s own death. More deeply, the invitation to live in vigilance began to be understood as code for God’s invitation to enter the fullness of life right now and not be lulled asleep by the pressures of ordinary life, wherein we are consumed with eating and drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage.

All these ordinary things, while good in themselves, can lull us to sleep by keeping us from being truly attentive and grateful within our own lives. Hence being alert, awake, and vigilant in the biblical sense is not a matter of living in fear of the world ending or of our lives ending.

It is a question of having love and reconciliation as our chief concerns, of thanking, appreciating, affirming, forgiving, apologizing, and being more mindful of the joys of living in human community and within the sure embrace of God.

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





**ADVENT HOPE:**

After a while, you get tired of hoping. After months and years of waiting, you begin to think that it is foolish to hold on. After trying and attempting so often to change things, you can begin to wonder whether it is time to give up. How do we continue to hope when so few things change? Does it even make sense to keep waiting when so few signs of hope can be seen?

How long have we been waiting for healing within our families? How often have we tried to bring estranged relatives together to resolve past hurts? Does it make sense to keep waiting, to keep hoping for reconciliation? How long have we been waiting for someone to love us, for someone to understand and enjoy us, for someone to build a life and a family together with us? How many times did we think, this was it, only to be disappointed? Does it make sense to keep hoping that the right person will come into our life? How long have we been waiting for our problems to be solved, for our sickness to be healed, for our grief to end? Does it make sense to keep hoping even when our hopes are so often frustrated?

Luke's Gospel says that it does [Luke 21:25-36]. The Gospel makes clear that the foundation of our hope is not what has happened to us in the past, but what God intends to do for us in the future. Luke's Gospel shows great turmoil on the earth and distress among the nations, but its message is that underneath that turmoil, God is working to change things. God is working to establish the Kingdom. It is God's action which is the foundation of our hope. That is why Jesus says that we should stand up and raise our heads because our redemption is at hand. We can always stand in hope because we believe that God is always working to change things and to bring about salvation.

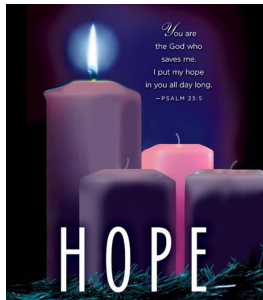
Advent is a season of hope; it is a season in which we try to remember what is the foundation of our hope; it is a season in which we rally ourselves to keep hoping.

Yet not every hope is real. There are some hopes that are foolish. This is why Advent encourages a realistic and wise hope that is based upon the truth. There are two characteristics to this wise hope — discernment and action.

Advent hope is a hope of discernment — a hope that realizes that it is not good to hope in things that can endanger us. If we find ourselves in the midst of abuse or manipulation, it is not good for us to just hope that things will change. We must remove ourselves from that danger. If someone has made it clear to us that they will not love us, that they do not want to relate to us, it is not wise to hope that they will change. We must face the truth that the relationship is ended and move on with life. Advent hope is also a hope of action. Although it always depends on God's timing and the emergence of new opportunities, when the door opens, we must be ready to act. When God provides us with an opportunity, we must seize that moment. When we sense things moving and changing, we must be ready to step forward and dedicate our energy and our talent to promote love and reconciliation. Without discernment and action, hope can be an illusion, an escape from reality. But when we use our heads and stand ready to act, hope can be a great force that can change us and our world.

There is a painting entitled *Checkmate*. It shows a scene of a young man playing chess with the devil. The artist has seized upon the moment when the devil has made a decisive move. He has checkmated the young man's king. You can see the satisfaction on the devil's face as well as the fear and the surprise on the face of the young man. The artist shows where the position of the chess pieces are on the board and many who understand the game of chess have examined that painting and agreed that the game was over — that the move of the devil was decisive, that he had won. Paul Murphy, who was a renowned world chess player, was once asked to look at this picture. He gazed at it for a long time and suddenly saw something that no one had seen before. He realized that there was yet a strategy that the young man could undertake. In his excitement over this discovery, Murphy cried out to the young man in the picture: "Don't give up. You still have a move! You still have a move!"

That is the message of Advent — don't give up. The game is not over. Keep watching and waiting.



I'll be running the race even while I wait.  
I'm waiting, I'm waiting on You, Lord and I am peaceful.  
I'm waiting on You, Lord, Though it's not easy.  
But faithfully, I will wait. Yes, I will wait.  
I will serve you while I'm waiting,  
I will worship you while I'm waiting.

The wait for Christmas is just a glimpse of the real waiting we have as we wait for the Lord to come again. So we are told to stay awake, and wait for the Lord.

And when the wait is over, what will we have to show for our lives? Will we stand before the Lord and say: "I was planning to come closer to you Lord and spend every day talking to you in prayer, but I just didn't get it into my schedule." Will we say: "I had always wanted to do things for others without seeking any form of payment from this world, but I was too busy doing other things." Or will we say: "Lord, you know that while I waited I tried my best to serve you in others. You know that while I waited I talked to you every day."

If our wait is one of action, one of service, and one of prayer, then when the Lord comes again at the end of our time or the end of the world, we will be found, as St. Paul says, blameless and holy before God at the coming of the Lord Jesus and His Holy Ones.

May our lives be lives of actively waiting for the Lord.

—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 a Senior in High School] are welcome to participate in this very special ministry. We are in 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.

**ALTAR SERVERS and LECTORS:**

We continue to be in need of servers and lectors. **Any student who is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> [and up] grade is invited to become an altar server; any student who is in the 5<sup>th</sup> [and up] grade is invited to become a lector.** These are both wonderful ministries — a great way to serve God and the faith community. If you would like to take advantage of these opportunities, **please give your name to Father John.** You do not have to attend Gilmour to be an altar server, lector, or to be involved in any other ministry at Our Lady Chapel. **Please call the chapel office [440-473-3560].**

**NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:**

Blessed Basile Moreau was the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, to which Fr. John and the Brothers at Gilmour belong. We have two booklets with Novenas to Blessed Basile Moreau. One is used for a personal intention or healing; the other is used when praying for the intention or healing of someone other than yourself. The Novenas were 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. Please see Father John and he will be glad to give you the booklets.

**HOW TO RELIEVE SUFFERING:**

Love is the first ingredient in the relief of suffering.

—Padre Pio



**WAITING:**

The season of Advent begins with two very positive readings, followed by a stern warning. The prophet Jeremiah begins our reflection [Jeremiah 33:14-16] — “The days are coming when the promise will be fulfilled,” Jeremiah wrote to people who were decimated by their enemies. The Babylonians had captured many of them and sent them in chains to Babylon. The Hebrews knew that they had sinned against God — the exile was a result of their sins. But God did not desert them. By their own choice they were no longer in a righteous relationship with God, but God did not give up on them. The time was coming when Jerusalem and Judah would be safe from all terrors. A righteous shoot of David would lead them. And Jerusalem would be a place of justice — a place of union with God.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Church at Thessalonica, takes a different approach. The people expected the Lord to come soon — some were nervous, some were absolutely frantic. Paul tells them that all they have to do is abound in love for one another. This will strengthen them so they will be blameless in holiness before God at the coming of the Lord Jesus and his holy ones.

These are comforting words — particularly in light of Jesus’ warnings in Luke’s Gospel [21:25-36]. Jesus speaks about horrible signs in the sun and the moon and the stars, and people dying of fright. But he also says that when we see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory, we should stand straight and raise our heads because our redemption is near.

Waiting for the Lord to come again is the focus of this first week of Advent. This waiting for the Lord is different than the usual way we wait. It is not like the waiting we experience when we go to the doctor’s office and sit in the lobby reading old magazines, or playing on our phones. We wait and wait and hope that when the nurse opens the door it’s going to be for us — all so we can get stuck with a needle. And we are bored. Waiting for the Lord is not like waiting in line at Disney World. We go through that endless maze, and keep walking and walking and going nowhere. But at least we know that when the wait is over and we get to the front of the line — if there is a front of the line — we are going to have fun. But waiting for the Lord is not like those long lines in Orlando because when we are in those lines we are not doing much — at least nothing all that constructive.

Waiting for the Lord demands that we make the best use of the time we have before He comes. How do we use our time? How do we wait for Him? So much of our time is wasted. We sit in front of a screen — computer, phone, or TV — for hours. Now, there is nothing wrong with relaxing, and there are great programs out there. But we need to accomplish more with our lives than watch TV, or play video games. When the Lord comes, we will have to show Him how we used the time He gave us. Hopefully, we will have accomplishments greater than achieving level 8 or watching the entire *Office series*.

John Waller wrote a song called *While I’m Waiting*. It is about the waiting we do during the Advent of our lives — waiting for the Second Coming of the Lord.

I’m waiting, I’m waiting on You, Lord,  
And I am hopeful, I’m waiting on You, Lord  
Though it is painful, but patiently, I will wait.  
I will move ahead, bold and confident,  
Taking every step in obedience.  
While I’m waiting, I will serve You.  
While I’m waiting, I will worship.  
While I’m waiting, I will not faint.



You will find a way out. Despite all the experiences of the past, despite all the lost opportunities, God is still acting. New opportunities are still emerging. The devil has not won. You still have a move. There still is hope.

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

**TAKING A POSITIVE APPROACH:**

The first week of Advent, begins the new liturgical year with Luke sending us dire warnings from Jesus — “People will die of fright;” “the powers of the heaven will be shaken;” “on earth nations will be in dismay” [Luke 21:25-36]. This striking imagery pointing to the end times can also direct our attention to life as we know it now. Frightening things happen — terrorists kill innocent people; random violence strikes our cities and schools; marriages collapse; friendships break up; illness attacks healthy bodies; natural disasters disrupt life.

In dealing with the inevitable collapses in life, we look to Christ for guidance. He warns us against destructive approaches such as carousing and drunkenness that make our hearts drowsy. Excessive drinking is not a healthy response to a failed marriage. Rejecting all refugees is not a Christian response to terrorism. Unrelenting anger at God is not finally a helpful response to the diminishment of life.

Christ has more positive advice for us when things fall apart — “pray for strength” so that we can hold it together; “be vigilant” so that tragedies do not take us totally by surprise; “stand erect and raise your heads” confident that the Son of Man will one day come to restore all things in himself.

We can imagine individuals who have followed the advice of the Lord when their lives unraveled. When Sam lost his job in his early fifties, he spent too much time sitting around feeling sorry for himself and anesthetizing his pain with excessive amounts of Scotch. Throughout, he wisely kept going to Mass, and one Sunday he caught part of the homily suggesting that Advent is a season of hope — a time to stay alert to new possibilities. Right then he decided to do less drinking and start making contacts to find a new job. Nothing broke his way for months, but he persevered in his networking efforts, somehow trusting that Christ was with him. When he finally found a good job, he vowed to try to help others facing similar problems.

When Rebecca’s husband suddenly walked out on her after 20 years of marriage, she retreated into an inner circle of pain, anger, and frustration focused on a burning desire to get back at him. She stopped going to Mass, but continued her lifelong habit of saying prayers before going to bed. One night while saying the Our Father she was struck by the part about forgiving those who trespass against us. It was clear to her that she had to forgive her husband if she was going to get on with her life. Trying to forgive proved to be a difficult process. She prayed regularly for God’s help to follow the example of Jesus who forgave his enemies. She tried to be vigilant, blocking out negative feelings, and to stand erect, rising above her confining circle of resentment. Over time she made progress which deepened her trust in Christ the Son of Man who restores all things.

What collapses and breakdowns have troubled you the most, and how can you manage them better with Christ’s help?

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

**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].



**FIVE “HOW-TO’S” FROM THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX:**

I used to be really skeptical about Thérèse. Many of my friends raved about her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, but I was unsure. I wondered how this young girl from a small town in 19<sup>th</sup> century France could teach me anything about prayer or sacrifice. She seemed to have been given everything as a child, and she entered a cloistered monastery before she had the chance to do anything I thought could be impressive.

I’m so grateful I was wrong. I checked out Thérèse for myself. I read her story, learned about her teachings of mercy and love, and found that, in truth, my life was changed. St. Thérèse is a woman of great faith and deep love. She taught me five things:

**How to laugh at myself.** Thérèse grew up struggling against scruples, a deep and dangerous scrutinization of one’s spiritual actions and merits. She worried she might never be good enough, and frequently found herself in violent fits of apology, trying to win back a worth she feared she’d lost. However, when she writes her story as a young adult, she has gathered the grace to look back upon her childhood with goodness and levity. Having gained a powerful perspective of mercy, she understands that the worries she once thought severe now seem to pass like vapor in the wind, trusting that God’s goodness outweighs her failings.

**How to grow up.** Thérèse shines to me as a remarkable example of growth. What we now call her autobiography was originally a series of letters to her religious superiors who had asked her to recount her spiritual journey — hence the work’s famous title. She wrote upon the request of others who saw greatness in her, and, perhaps while she wrote, she smiled to see how far she’d come. She, who started as a frightened little girl in a small town, grew into a strong leader of prayer and devotion, even working to train new members of her Carmelite religious community. Unashamed of where she started, Thérèse gives great glory to God for guiding her into her present.

**How to receive mercy.** Thérèse offers us powerful teaching of mercy. While Saints like Paul and Augustine of Hippo tell of their dramatic conversions from serious sin to deep grace, it seems Thérèse never had a “pre-conversion” life. She writes about knowing Christ’s love for her since her beginning. Her spiritual director even declared that she had never committed a mortal sin! How then can she teach us about mercy? Thérèse describes moments in her prayer when God showed her even the worst sins of Hell, only then to reveal that His mercy had infinitely greater power. Through her quiet devotion and daily prayer, she knew that no sin was too great for the Lord’s ocean of mercy. And she rushed with joy to God at every chance He had to forgive her.

**How to pray with confidence.** When Thérèse was a young girl, her sister presented her with a basket of different dresses, telling her to choose her favorite. Thérèse shouted out: “I choose all!” and took the whole basket. This cry of joy has become a motto for many under her patronage, for it reminds us that nothing is impossible for God. Thérèse comes before God, having emptied herself; thus, she can be filled to surplus with grace. She often prayed that God would make her a great Saint — even greater than Teresa of Avila! Without fear before her Heavenly Father, Thérèse bears her heart and trusts that God will show her His abundance.

**How to love without fear.** Thérèse is a patron saint of mission, yet she hardly traveled anywhere during her life — she was even a cloistered nun! But, her patronage comes from the great love she poured out to her sisters in community, and even in letters to those beyond her convent walls. She trusted that her intercessory prayers had a veritable impact on her world, and she believed that God would carry her love to the hearts of those for whom she prayed. Learning not to fear the sting of unrequited love, she poured out compassion and patience to her sisters in community — even when some of them



could hardly stand her. She knew that love was a gift given in deep freedom, having learned how best to love from her Father in Heaven.

Thérèse is a powerful spiritual example for us — shining with patience, grace, and love and growing from a frightened child into a confident woman of devotion; Thérèse models a little way of realistic holiness for all of us. She desired to be great, not in her performances or actions, but in the quiet of her heart, learning to love as Christ Himself loved. So may she serve for us all as a great model of Christian virtues and a generous heart. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, pray for us!

—written by Nick Bernard, a Campus Minister

**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](http://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].**

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

<b>Monday:</b>	Isaiah 2:1-5, Matthew 8:5-11
<b>Tuesday:</b>	Romans 10:9-18, Matthew 4:18-22
<b>Wednesday:</b>	Isaiah 25:6-10, Matthew 15:29-37
<b>Thursday:</b>	Isaiah 26:1-6, Matthew 7:21-27
<b>Friday:</b>	Isaiah 29:17-24, Matthew 9:27-31
<b>Saturday:</b>	Isaiah 30:19-26, Matthew 9:35-10:1

**2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Advent:** Baruch 5:1-9, Philippians 1:4-11, Luke 3:1-6

**RUN THE RACE:**

Catholic faith continually reminds us that we are not chess players in a dark room lit by a single light bulb, absolutely alone with God. Rather we are being cheered on and helped by a huge heavenly stadium full of saints, virgins, martyrs and ordinary blokes who have “fought the good fight” and “finished the race” under circumstances just like ours. Frustrated with your job? So were a million saints who soldiered through to heavenly glory. In pain, lonely, frightened, confused? They’ve been there too, and they are shouting to you from the stands: “You can make it! We did! And we know you can too! Our God really is faithful to save you as he saved us!” So run the race with perseverance and drop all the discouraging junk the world hands you. God will be with you every step of the way! He is your coach, you trainer, your cheerleader and your biggest fan! God really is faithful to save you as he saved us!” So run the race with perseverance and drop all the discouraging junk the world hands you. God will be with you every step of the way! He is your coach, you trainer, your cheerleader and your biggest fan!