

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer for the third week in Advent ~

I praise you, Lord,
and ask,
who am I,
A small one of the earth,
that the word of the Lord
should come to me?
Open my ears
that it may be a word
that compels me
to do what is right and just.
Open my heart
that it maybe a word of rejoicing.

O Majesty,
O Splendor
greater than the mountains and the sky!
I am a child of earth
who adores you.
I love you,
And I live
because you have desired me.
Praised be God
whose greatness has reached
to the ends of the earth.
Let me live in your presence
and give thanks through your name!
Amen.

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

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 13th**, 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 15th. 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 15th so that they may be distributed to Fatima and the other organizations for their celebrations. Join in the 2nd 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 Anita Yex, who is seriously ill with COVID
- For Joseph Boehm who is critically ill with COVID
- For Marie Forsythe, who is seriously ill with COVID
- For Clare Simonetta, infant daughter of Gilmour Science instructor, Jessica Simonetta, who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Cassandra Williams [*15], sister of Sebastian Williams [*18] who is undergoing treatment for a soft tissue cancerous tumor which is inoperable.
- For Erin Crow, aunt of Logan Cleary [*20] who is in critical condition following an accident.

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Melvin Jackson, father of Taylor Jackson Wilson [*07]
- For Chris Karas
- For Ellen Cohn, mother of Gary Cohn [*79]
- For Ellen Smith, mother of Tina Newton, grandmother of Justin Newton [*17].
- For Brother James Blaszak, C.S.C.
- For Robert Figurella, grandfather of Alex [*22] and Natalie [*23] Figurella
- For Mildred Jasany
- For Jeanne Crow, grandmother of Logan Cleary [*20]
- For Tony Waldron, grandfather of Dominic Schimizzi [*20]
- For Robert Gramc, Sr.
- For Father Don Cozzens
- For Lou Cangelosi, grandfather of Lou [*09] and Marissa [*12] Cangelosi.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

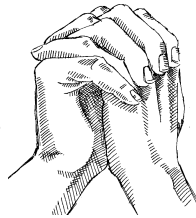
- For a person in need of a caretaker.
- For a family going through a difficult time.
- For an end to violence and racial injustice in our society.
- For a growth in awareness of the blessing of family life.
- For all those struggling with various addictions.
- For an end to sexual abuse and lack of 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.

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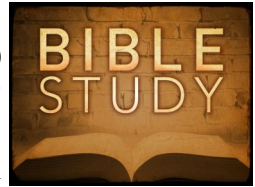
PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Catherine Ivery, aunt of Kitchen associate director, Bobbie Bonner, who is serious ill with COVID
- For Liam Kirchner, a child, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- 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 — WEDNESDAY, DEC. 15th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, December 15th 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: Mary: Model of Advent and Christmas**



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, December 12: 3 rd Week in Advent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, December 13: St. Lucy	NO MASS
Tuesday, December 14: St. John of the Cross	NO MASS
Wednesday, December 15:	NO MASS
Thursday, December 16:	NO MASS
Friday, December 17:	NO MASS
Saturday, December 18: 4 th Week in Advent	NO MASS
Sunday, December 19: 4 th Week in Advent	10:00 AM 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.



REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

What a delight to reflect on the Scripture Readings for this 3rd Week in Advent — they remind me of what it felt like to be a child again at Christmas time. Our Scripture readings are filled with hope, joy, and the anticipation that something great is about to happen.

I remember a time when I was about 10 years old, and it was in the morning before the sun came up. I was out on my paper route delivering newspapers and was by myself. I was almost finished with my route when the snow started falling. I remember stopping at a street corner not far from my house and just watched the snow fall. I was so quiet and I felt an overwhelming sense of peace. I wanted to stay on that street corner forever because everything in the world seemed right just as it was.

I think that moment was my first memory and experience with Reality — the way Life is without all the clutter. The way God lives in and through me and with all that is. I think I wanted to stay on that street corner because I was overwhelmed by experiencing God all around me — Christ was everywhere! As St. Paul says in his letter to the Church at Philippi: “Rejoice! The Lord is near; have no anxiety at all, for the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” [Philippians 4:4-7]. It is proof to me that God is always present and there is always reason to “Rejoice!”

That brings us to the writings of the Prophet Zephaniah which are full of prophecies against the nation, the leaders, and the people of Israel. Disasters will befall God’s people because of their false worship and disregard for the needs of the poor. God is going to sweep away all living things from the face of the earth. The leaders, the judges, the prophets, and the priests have all defiled the nation and the city of Jerusalem.

But all this sad-bad news is replaced by the glad-news that this very same God of troubling vengeance has remained faithful and actually is living in the presence of Israel; fear and disenchantment have been driven away and the victorious warrior is now singing and dancing with joy over the return of Israel [Zephaniah 3:14-18].

The images in this poem are celebrational and reflective of the ritual festivals of this agricultural land. Instead of a sweeping away, there is a gathering up; rather than banishment, there is inclusion. The people are to shout for joy that what was held against them has been removed, and they are to relate gratefully with their new and loving King.

This 3rd Week in Advent used to be called “Rejoice Sunday” [Gaudate Sunday], and the themes running through the Scripture Readings are certainly joyful. We are now a little less than two weeks away from the celebration of the feast of the Nativity. The sense of joyful anticipation is emphasized. Jesus, as Victorious Warrior, is drawing near. Paul’s letter to the Church at Philippi echoes strongly this spirit. Someone very good to us and for us is near and we will be better for that Someone’s arrival.

John the Baptist continues to take “center stage” as he announces the imminent arrival of the Messiah [Luke 3:10-18]. In response to this preaching, various groups of people line up to find out what they must do to be ready. We all want to know what’s expected of us — what’s going to be on the test; how will I be prepared for the upcoming job interview; what’s involved in taking care of aging parents. The crowds, the tax collectors, the soldiers and presumably other groups of influential people, stepped up to make sure they would be wearing the proper clothes and appearing just right and ready.

John tells each in turn to let go of the natural inclinations of their trade or lifestyle. Basically, John is telling them to be freed from their fullness of self to receive a life that leads to the fullness of life. John the Baptist uses a familiar farm image to describe one of the missions of the One who is to come. The Waited-For will have a large fan in His hand and will separate the precious grains of wheat from the

**ARE WE WAITING FOR SOMEONE WHO IS ALREADY HERE?**

One of the problems with the Scripture Readings used in our liturgical celebration of Advent is that many of us logically employ them to prepare for Christmas — forgetting that none of them were composed for that purpose. This is especially true on this “Rejoice [Laetare] Sunday.” Our sacred authors aren’t rejoicing over the future coming of Jesus at Bethlehem — they’re joyfully reflecting on the God already in their midst.

Few prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures zero in on this belief better than Zephaniah [3:14-18]. Active during the late 7th century BCE reign of the reforming king Josiah, the prophet ends his short collection of oracles with a basic reminder to people of faith that no matter what’s happening around us — no matter how confusing the life we live, no matter the tensions we constantly experience — “God is in your midst, a mighty savior; he will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, he will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals.”

We must never forget that the historical Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed the same message at the beginning of his public ministry, reminding his disciples that God’s kingdom is so close, we can extend our hand and touch it [Mark 1:15]. God is present and working effectively in each of our lives.

Luke was convinced that the morality flowing from this conviction of the presence of God’s kingdom was so powerful that it trumped even what was taught and experienced by the prophetic reformer John the Baptizer. Though the evangelist certainly agreed with John’s command to share what we have with those who have nothing, to stop extorting money from the helpless, and to cease lying about others’ actions, he was convinced that Jesus’ arrival would usher in an even deeper way of relating to God and the people around us. For the evangelist, the unique ritual which would symbolize this new covenant wouldn’t be just a “water” baptism — it would come “with the Holy Spirit and fire” [Luke 3:10-18]

Serious students of Scripture respect the importance of the Spirit in Luke/Acts. Writing in the mid-80’s, the evangelist and his community know just the risen Jesus. As far as we can determine, none had ever personally encountered the itinerant Galilean preacher who lived and taught during the first third of the first century CE. They experienced only the “new creation” who was neither Jew nor Gentile, slave or free, male or female. And it was the Spirit who helped them surface that risen Jesus in their daily lives.

Unlike his mentor, the Baptizer, who was constantly looking for the arrival of the Lord — the historical Jesus was convinced that God was already present, day by day working effectively in everything and everyone they experienced. Though John thought the morality which he expected his followers to practice would hasten the Lord’s coming into this world, Jesus was convinced that the love of neighbor which he preached was simply the essential way to surface the God already here.

No wonder Paul encourages his Philippian community to rejoice [Philippians 4:4-7]. He certainly wants the risen Jesus to quickly come in a triumphant “Parousia” — to complete the salvation he had achieved by his death and resurrection. But in the meantime, he reminds his followers that Jesus, as Lord is among us here and now. Why would anyone waste their time longing for someone who’s already here?

Centuries after the historical Jesus’ resurrection, when we began to celebrate his birthday, we also must realize that we employ our Advent readings in ways their authors could never have imaged. Forgetting about the upcoming “Johnny come lately” feast of Christmas, we should again hear these passages in their original settings. Interesting what messages we surface when we dare do that.

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

JOY:

Many people have a hard time experiencing joy because life is unfair. Here's an example: my older brother has a full head of wavy hair. I went bald when I was twenty! People assume he is younger than me. Even though he's in his seventies — and happily married — women flock to him. Life is unfair! While my example is humorous, other injustices are no laughing matter — they can break your heart and even break your spirit. A good example is when a deadly disease afflicts a young person. Who can have joy in the face of such a tragedy? Hardship strikes one family and not another. Nature — or God — seems unfair. Perhaps even worse than those natural injustices are the ones we inflict on each other. Take the many instances of domestic cruelty, or abuse by those in authority or positions of power. In the face of all this, we can start brooding about unjust treatment — or unfair, hurtful words — and we are robbed of joy.

What is the answer? John the Baptist tells us in Luke's Gospel that God will sort things out. God comes with a winnowing fan which separates wheat from chaff. The good he keeps, the worthless he burns [Luke 3:10-18]. This does not mean that we do nothing to combat injustice. On the contrary, our hope for final justice strengthens us to work for fairness. Remember, the poor box in the temple in Jerusalem had the word "justice" written on it. Justice is all about right relationships.

The word justice appears 157 times in the Bible. Joy is more frequent — 201 times. That does not include words related to joy such as "rejoice" — 261 times. We can only do so much to bring justice into the world but we can do a lot to bring joy into our hearts. St. Paul reminds us: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I say it again, rejoice!" [Philippians 4:4-7]. Paul is not making a suggestion — it is a command — Rejoice! Rejoice always! And the prophet Zephaniah says: "Sing joyfully, O Israel" [Zephaniah 3:14-18]. Do you have a joyful song in in your heart?

As the birth of Jesus approaches, our hearts need to be filled with joy — "Sing joyfully, O Israel!" Yes, life can be unfair — painfully and incomprehensibly unfair. And we do live in a world of cruelty and injustice that only God can set right. While we can only do small acts of justice, we can do a lot to open our hearts to joy.

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

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.

**CHILDREN'S BULLETINS:**

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

**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].



Reconciliation

expendable chaff. The grain is that those who will receive life through the Messiah will in turn give that life through their deeds. The chaff will be those who will choose other ways of receiving meaning for their lives.

Throughout this exchange, John continues to distribute the "Good News". The rejoicing is both the giving and the receiving of the News of the coming of the presence of God. This is a partial reason for the giving of gifts during this Advent and Christmas season. Gifts are meant to express something about the giver, the receiver and something about the relationship between both.

The seven sacraments within the Catholic Church say the same kind of things as gifts of God. During this Advent season, we are encouraged to give each other the sacraments of joy and life. These big and little things are gestures expressive of the giver, the receiver and the relationship between both. God does this in the sending of the Good News in Christ. The things we give must have accompanying notes verbally expressing or making explicit what is being said by the gift. We are saying something about our feelings, our reverence for the receiver, and something explicit about our union or love. The gift says something of the good news about our relationship and the words complete it and make it all a Christmas "Presence" and Christmas sacrament within the present we are sharing.

John was preparing to present Jesus and made it explicit by his preaching. In giving and receiving Christmas sacraments we are symbolizing in our little spiritual way, exactly what God is doing every time we gather at the Eucharist and every time we live out God's Grace.

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

WHO AM I?

Abba Poeman said to Abba Joseph: "Tell me how I can become a monk." And Joseph replied: "If you want to find rest here and hereafter, say in every occasion: 'Who am I? and do not judge anyone.'" Abba Poeman was very direct about the level of sanctity cultivated at Scetis and its desert outposts. Every day say to yourself: "Who am I?" On Monday: "Who am I?" Answer: I am the one who is tired of staying here in the desert any longer. It's not anything like I thought it would be. On Tuesday: "Who am I?" Answer: I am the one who has little enough to give to the world, but I would like to give it anyway. On Wednesday: "Who am I?" Answer: I am not that showoff who brings water to all of us every day. "Who am I?" "Who am I?" "Who am I?" At base, it is a simple enough question — but ask it often enough and answer it truthfully enough and you might, sometime, answer it sincerely enough to know the true answer the next time you look in the mirror — I am the person who pretends to care for people more than I really do. Or, I am the person who talks about the Scriptures, but seldom really sits with them and takes them seriously. Or, I am exhausted being a person who is trying to be faithful to a daily practice — but is not. Or, I am a person who never tells the truth about my family background — which means that I have learned to lie well.

Suddenly the answer to what makes for spiritual transformation becomes plain — I will really be a monk when I put down all my righteousness, am honest about myself, and never again judge another person. The effect is immediate. I am free now. There is nothing anyone can say about me that I have not already admitted about myself. Abba Joseph has enabled me to accept who I am. I don't need to lie anymore. I am ready to grow again.

—taken from the writings of Joan Chittister, O.S.B., which appear on the internet



Who Am I?

EUCHARISTIC 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.



ADVENT IS A “HANDS ON” EXPERIENCE:

An elderly person in Kansas City went each day to the newspaper box on the corner. She placed her money in the slot, opened the door, and took as many newspapers as were there. Finally she was caught. The charge was that she was selling the papers. She was acquitted — she was actually taking the papers back to her home to use as fuel. She wanted to remember what warmth felt like for a few moments each day. One third of our fellow citizens in the United States are either badly fed or living in sub-standard housing or wearing rags. Sometimes they suffer from all three afflictions. The situation deteriorates daily. Our privately funded Soup Kitchens are sometimes literally running out of soup. Incidentally, contrary to popular prejudice, the majority of our poor are white; most of them are children. We Americans have the capability to watch a comet strike Jupiter, but we have failed to give an old woman in Kansas City fuel for her house.

Why should this tale of woe excite us this third Week in Advent? After all, we can already see beautifully wrapped gifts and bright Christmas trees. The answer is to be found in Luke’s Gospel [3:10-18]. It grabs us rudely by the throat and reminds us that ours is a social Gospel. It is not merely a question of God and me, but rather God, me, and the other person. This is so especially when the other person is going down for the third time. Many Catholics charge that the Church is oftentimes off the mark. This charge becomes particularly true when “economic issues” are discussed.

Yet, John the Baptist reminds us that we need to be a “hands on” Church. What can be more explicit about moral questions than the three answers given by John to questions put to him? One section of his audience asked him: “What must we do then?” In answer he said: “If anyone has two overcoats, he must share with the man who has none, and the one with an extra loaf of bread must do the same.” John is not telling his audience to give away everything they have; rather, he is advising them to give out of their surplus.

Then it is the tax collectors’ turn — “Master, what must we do?” His answer was swift: “Do not rob taxpayers blind.” Finally the military — “What about us?” John continues on a roll: “Hold no kangaroo court-martials. Do not shake anyone down.” This advice from the Jewish holy man can hardly be called the general principles of morality. Rather, the Baptist is crossing the “t’s” and dotting the “i’s.” A spiritual director at a seminary was admirably nicknamed John the Baptist by the students. He not only lived like the Baptizer, but he also spoke like him to them. Would anyone be tempted to give us such a nickname? Probably not.

St. Paul endorses the advice of John the Baptist. Paul is writing to the small Christian colony at Philippi in Greece. It had been founded by Philip — the father of Alexander the Great — and so its name. Paul writes: “Let your generosity be manifest to all.” As a matter of fact, this advice to be generous with a five dollar bill is a broken record in the letters of Paul. One finds the advice not only here, but also in his letters to the Romans, Galatians, Hebrews, and in both letters to the Corinthians. Paul did not confine himself to enunciating the general principles of ethical conduct. Rather, he was taking direct aim at the checkbooks of his followers.

No doubt they were making as many moans about Paul of Tarsus as we do when people ask us for the poor. The human condition is the human condition no matter what the century. But do keep in mind that Advent is designed to give a serious electrical shock to one’s spiritual nervous system. It is true that Jesus cannot be born again, but, we can. And that really is what Advent is all about. It is unabashedly demanding that we give birth to our best selves.

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

**IT’S THIS SIMPLE:**

6 The beginning is always today.

—Mary Shelley

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].**

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

Monday: Numbers 24:2-25:9, Matthew 21:23-27

Tuesday: Zephaniah 3:1-13, Matthew 21:28-32

Wednesday: Isaiah 45:6-25, Luke 7:18-23

Thursday: Isaiah 54:1-10, Luke 7:24-30

Friday: Genesis 49:2-10, Matthew 1:1-17

Saturday: Jeremiah 23:5-8, Matthew 1:18-25

4th Week in Advent: Micah 5:1-4, Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-45

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — DECEMBER 18th:

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. In this critical time, this is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

REMEMBER:

Those who carry God in their heart bears heaven with him wherever they go —St. Ignatius of Loyola



IS YOUR FAVORITE WORD “ME”?

Do you ever find yourself feeling like “you know a little better or a little more” than the next person because you’re involved in your faith? Do you ever struggle with dealing with people who don’t believe — or who live totally self-centered lives? Do you ever find yourself getting held to a different standard because you claim to be a Catholic who is “active” in their faith? Are there people in your life that you try to be an example to, who always seem to be waiting for you to do or say something “un-Christian” so that they can point out your faults or failures?

Listen to what St. Paul wrote: “In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel” [1 Corinthians 9:14]. It sounds very, very simple when we read it, but when we really stop to think about it, it’s actually a pretty severe challenge and command made by St. Paul to the people living in Corinth. Paul is reminding them that it IS NOT ENOUGH to merely preach the gospel, but that the Lord ORDERS those who preach it — not just priests, or other leaders, but EVERY follower who calls themselves a Christian — to live by it.

By virtue of our baptism, we have a responsibility — EVERY ONE OF US — to live our lives for Christ. Every time we make the sign of the cross, we remind ourselves of our baptism, and of our belonging to God’s family through Jesus Christ. Since we’re part of the family, it is not a suggestion by Jesus — it’s not His “hope” that we’ll preach the good news — it is a commandment; IT IS OUR DUTY.

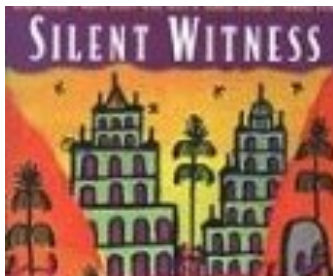
How do we do it? Glad you asked. Here are a few ways:

1. By living by the gospel ourselves, just like St. Paul wrote.
2. By letting people know that we are Catholic Christians — never being ashamed of it.
3. By realizing that those who don’t know God, or who don’t want to follow God, will watch us more closely, and even, occasionally, wait for us to screw up — to make themselves feel better about their own decisions.
4. By accepting the challenge to live our lives differently.
5. By growing in knowledge of the scriptures — like we’re doing right now. God is blessing you; Jesus is smiling on you; the Holy Spirit is working in you, and I am proud of you!
6. Lastly — by NEVER taking the Lord’s name in vain. For some of us, this one is no problem; for others — well, it’s a big problem. A lot of people have gotten to a point where it’s just second nature — they don’t even think about it. To break ourselves and those around us of the habit, however, is an incredible sign that we respect God and love God too much to dishonor Him in that way — especially since He has been so good to us. Just think, is there a better, more practical way to live out the gospel daily and live the challenge of Christ, than to make it your mission that no one takes the Lord’s name in vain? One friend of mine even charges the people around her at work a dollar every time they take the Lord’s name in vain in front of her — how cool is that?

As St. Francis of Assisi once said: “I preach the gospel and use words only when necessary.” That’s what it is all about.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS:

Again this year we will accept memorial donations to help defray the cost of flowers and decorations which we use in our chapel for the Christmas season. If you are interested in making a donation **in memory of loved ones**, please put the names of the loved ones along with your donation in an envelope, mark it “Christmas Flowers,” and either give it to Father John or drop it in the offering basket. We will publish the names of the loved ones in the Bulletin as a memorial.



REJOICE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD!

“Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel!” [Zephaniah 3:14-18]. “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!” [Philippians 4:4-7]. These words from the Prophet Zephaniah and Paul’s letter to the Church at Philippi frame the festive call of what used to be called “Gaudete Sunday”. Pausing to rejoice may seem a bit of a challenge to some. We all grapple with life at times. These struggles can be so overwhelming and intense that they rob us of joy and a sense of peaceful wellbeing. Personal, corporate, familial, ecclesial, and social conflicts are all too plentiful. We are constantly bumping elbows with our weaknesses and sinfulness as well as those of the world. Our sad, painful cries reveal our incompleteness.

But, if we listen carefully, we can hear within our discomfort God’s call to peace, to move beyond, and heal the sadness, and journey to a better place. We yearn for this, but are not always clear as to how it can be achieved. God is constantly beckoning us to grow and change. Is this not the message of Christ? In Christ, God reveals incredible things about who He is and who we are. Life’s eternal destiny is made known. God is with us, and He brightens the often dark recesses of human hearts. We have to see ourselves in Christ — the source of hope, life, love, faith, and meaning has been revealed.

However, accepting God’s invitation stretches us a bit. We have to leave old and static ways behind and search for something new. We can even experience discomfort and anxiety as we move and change. Growing pains are more than physical. We do not need to look far for pain and heartache. Our mirrors reveal a good measure of it. Our world cries as inflation soars, food banks struggle to feed the hungry, the devastating effects of climate change continue, the pandemic lingers, political corruption abounds, racial injustice persists, and our borders remain unwelcome places of conflict. This partial list outlines what is ailing humankind. Add anger, growing resentment, frustration, exhaustion, and impatience, and the situation is potentially volatile. Our Church, living in the modern world, also feels the effects of the tides of conflict, disillusionment, division, and change.

Where is God’s invitation being revealed in all that is happening within and without? Pope Benedict XVI gives us a hint in his encyclical: *Saved in Hope*. He writes that it is “only the great certitude of hope that my own life and history in general, despite all failures, are held firm by the indestructible power of Love, and that this gives them meaning and importance, only this kind of hope can then give the courage to act and to persevere.” In short, a deep life of faith assures us that no matter what or where life brings us, God is still working. We will not fall apart or fall into despair! Human nature leads us to believe that any experience of joy is deferrable to some future time when sadness, stress, disharmony, and discontent are no more. Believing this to be true, we find ourselves waiting for the day when the lion can actually peacefully lay down with the lamb [see Isaiah 11]. Until then, we cling to our misery and apathy. We convince ourselves that we are victims and hence, powerless. Today, however, we are reminded to rejoice in the Lord “always!” We have to open a path to it now, amid unsettling and disturbing situations, and not defer it to the future.

We are not finished, but are all works in progress. Our faith reminds us that creation groans and is in agony [see Romans 8]. We are all on the path to fulfillment and redemption — an assurance revealed to us in the Birth of Christ. Even though life moves us to stumble over our weaknesses and sinfulness, we can as Pope Benedict reminds us, “open ourselves to truth, to love, to what is good. We can free our life and the world from the poisons and contaminations that could destroy the present and the future.



This makes sense even if outwardly we achieve nothing or seem powerless in the face of overwhelming hostile forces.” Discord and suffering are a part of life and often cannot be controlled. But we fail to see that what we ultimately seek is something we already have! Do we not want the faith that brings the assurance that God has things in His care? Do we not wish to have a love that allows us to see the beauty and goodness that abounds, even amid heartache and despair? Do we not desire to possess the hope that God will bring us to the oneness of His Kingdom where all is fulfilled in the blessed presence of Christ? This is why we rejoice today. What we seek has already been given to us in Christ. God has profoundly and intimately touched all humanity and all creation. When we journey with our friends of faith, hope, and love, then even in the midst of darkness and uncertainty, we will experience joy! We will know, beyond doubt, that Divine Surprises will come and that lasting peace is our inheritance. This is not something we can earn — it is a pure and unconditional gift. God’s perfect gift was revealed to us in the birth of Christ. That same gift can be born again in each of us. This is the miracle of Christmas.

Our celebration today makes perfect sense. Look above and beyond whatever is unsettling, disturbing, or hurtful. Leave the fear, uncertainty, and anxiety aside, and see God’s truth and the truth of who you are. Rejoice! Forget about what happens tomorrow and beyond. Deal only with today. The future brings its challenges as it unfolds into the present. Control what you can and depart from what you cannot. God’s friends — blessed faith, hope, and love — are within you. They are His gift. There are no requirements to earn them. Accept them as God’s tender, intimate, and loving blessing. Rejoice that Someone as beautiful and magnificent as God thinks so highly of you! This is what gives life its importance.

—taken from the writings of Father Mark Suslenko, which appear on the internet

CHARITY — THE RULE OF LIFE:

Luke tells us that John, the son of Zachariah and Elizabeth, is out in the desert preaching good news and baptizing those who request it. He has created such a reputation that people are thinking that he might be the Christ — the long-awaited Messiah — an expectation he could have fostered but vigorously denied, pointing instead to one who is mightier who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. Many people came to John asking advice [Luke 3:10-18] and he told them: “Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none.” When despised tax collectors, who cooperated with the occupying Romans and often overcharged their fellow Jews, asked John what they should do, he replied: “Stop collecting more than is prescribed.” John also admonished soldiers who protected the tax collectors not to practice extortion, and to be satisfied with their wages.

As we reflect on how to apply Luke’s Gospel to our lives in the world today, we hear John the Baptist telling us to be generous to those in need, to accept our limitations, and to treat others justly. We can imagine individuals heeding this advice. Joy has a lucrative job with an advertising firm that enables her to indulge her passion for fine clothes. For years she was in the habit of donating clothes she no longer needed or wanted to the annual Thanksgiving clothing drive. This year she made a prayerful decision to donate not only clothes she no longer wanted, but also some she liked and still wanted to wear. Having cleared out some space in her closet, she felt a new open space in her heart which led to genuine prayers of gratitude. In that prayerful spirit, she resolved to look for other ways to share her material blessings with the less fortunate.

Joe, a middle-aged business man, has always been envious of his older brother who was a better athlete in high school and became far more successful in the business world. Desperate to outdo his brother, Joe started his own business, made some shady deals, treated his few employees badly, lost money, and had to shut down. Hitting bottom, Joe was forced into an intense period of reflection that revealed his root problem of envy which led to his destructive behavior. With the help of John the Baptist, he came to see a path forward — repentance for his sins against others; learning to accept himself with his strengths and weaknesses; coming to terms with his limitations; and replacing his envy of his brother with fraternal charity.

What can you learn about generosity and self-acceptance from John the Baptist and how can you practice those virtues in your everyday life?

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



LOVE DRIVES OUT ANXIETY:

St. Paul says in his Letter to the Church at Philippi: “Don’t worry about anything” [Philippians 4:4-7]. Well, how realistic is that? Don’t we have a lot of things to worry about? All indicators show anxiety is on the increase in America. Prozac and other related drugs are the most prescribed medicine on the market. Surveys show that Americans, rather than becoming more secure and confident, are becoming more worried and anxious. Studies also show that most of that anxiety does not make sense. One report claims that 40% of things that people worry about never happen; 30% have already happened; 12% of the people worry about what other people might say; 10% worry about possibly getting sick without any reason to do so. Therefore only 8% of anxiety can be traced to some real and present trouble. How do we then explain that 92% of anxiety seems to be free-floating and not connected to any objective, present reality?

Gerald May — a famous American psychologist — has an explanation. He believes that the cause for most of the anxiety in our country does not result from any exterior factors in our environment, but rather from forces within ourselves. Analyzing numerous patients who came to him with anxiety, May concluded that when you look beneath the worry what you find is fear. Now that makes sense. If you are fearful about something, it is going to cause anxiety. But May also says that if you look underneath that fear, what you discover is hurt. People who are hurt have their confidence shaken, their security challenged, and so they become afraid. Taking another step deeper, May concludes that underneath that hurt what we discover is love. It is the desire to love and be loved that opens us to hurt. In other words Mays suggests that what on the surface appears as anxiety is actually being caused by a trouble in our ability to give and receive love. If we have difficulty in loving and being loved, that causes hurt, which causes fear, which surfaces in anxiety.

Well, if this is true, then what are we to do about it? After all, if the basic problem is one of love, we cannot force people to love us. We cannot always go out and find someone to reciprocate our love. That is true. But the one thing that we can always do is to choose to act in love. We can always give ourselves in love to others. If we read St. Luke’s Gospel correctly, John the Baptist seems to know this. Because when people come to him and say, “What should we do?” his answer is to give, to share, to treat people with fairness and generosity [Luke 3:10-18]. John the Baptist is telling us that when we give to others, we give to ourselves as well, and we facilitate God’s kingdom.

Now this insight puts a whole different slant on what we mean by generosity. Most of the time when we choose to give to the poor, feed the hungry or visit the sick, we do so because we believe they need it. Of course, they do. But we often forget that those choices of loving are actions that we need as well. When we give ourselves to others in love, that has the power to heal our hurt, to reduce our fear, to lessen our anxiety. To put it in another way, it is hard to be preoccupied with our own anxiety when we are giving ourselves in love of others.

There are many opportunities for this kind of loving — particularly in this season. There are people in our families who need our attention. There are opportunities to serve in a hunger center, to participate in a Christmas project, to buy charity calendars, to contribute to innumerable institutions who would put our generosity to good use. But as you decide what to give and to whom, remember that the love which is given not only benefits the receiver, but the giver as well. When we act in love, we heal our hurt, we lessen our fear, we reduce our anxiety.

So if you find yourself worried and are unsure what is causing it, the gospel tells us not to obsess about our anxiety, but instead reach out to others in love. Because that love can ground us and strengthen us. That love can allow us to follow the advice of Paul and not worry about anything. Of course, if you prefer, you could address your anxiety by using Prozac or seeing a therapist. Such choices can at times be appropriate. But you should not forget that love is cheaper and often more effective.

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