

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer To Follow the Call ~

Loving God,
you speak to me
through all of life.
Help me to trust you
and to trust that what you desire for me
lies in the deepest part of my heart.

I know that
What you desire of me
Is to grow
And be the person
You created me to be —
fully human
and fully alive.

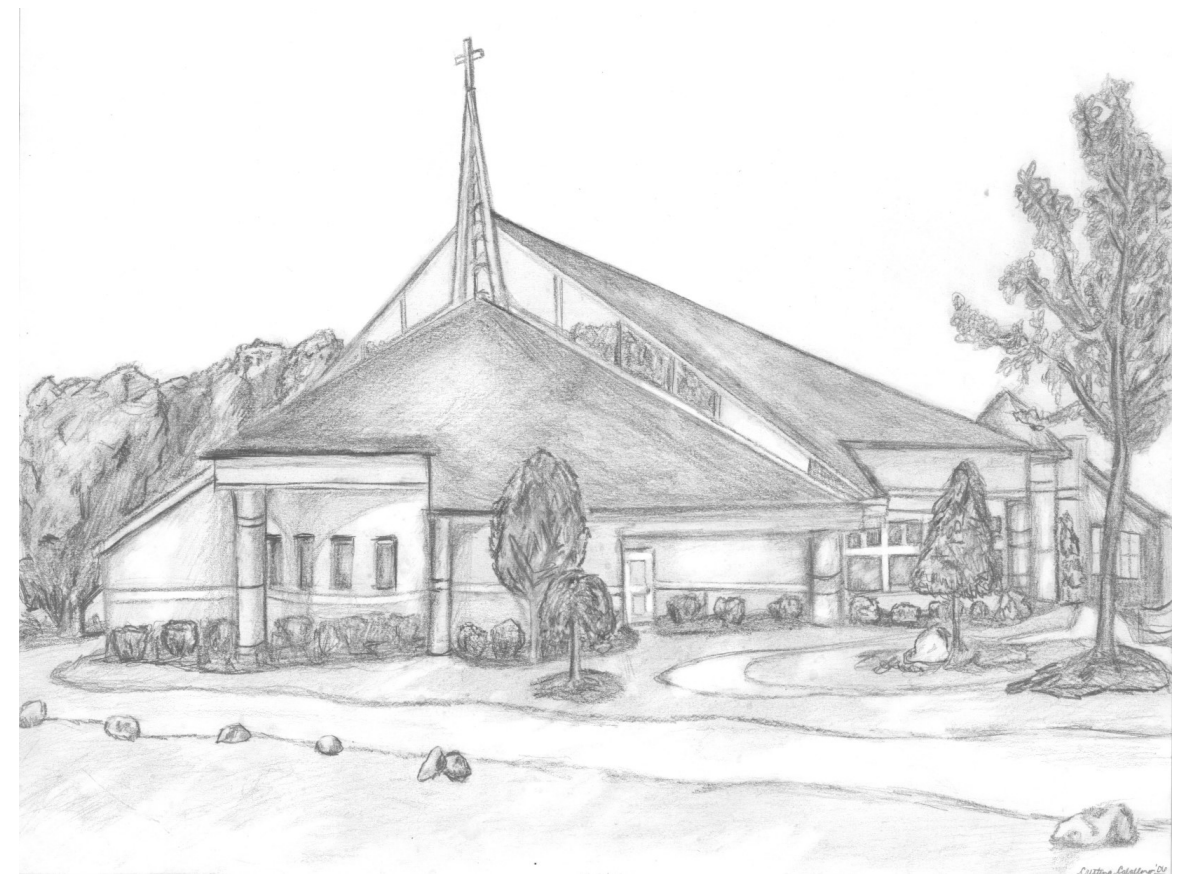
May I always
center my life on you
and hear joyfully
your call to be your companion.

Help me to follow my desire
to live my life
as best I can
and to serve others
with the special gifts
you have given me.
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.

2022 CALENDARS:

Calendars for the year 2022 are available for your taking. Besides having space for you to write your family appointments, the calendar also contains information about Mass and Reconciliation times here at Our Lady Chapel. We wish to thank the Schulte-Mahon-Murphy Funeral Homes for their generous donation of these 2022 Calendars to us. Please feel free to take as many calendars as you would like. Thank you.



2021 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS: If you would like a copy of your 2021 Contributions to Our Lady Chapel, please call the chapel office [440-473-3560] and we will be glad to send it out to you. Since many have their own records and do not need to receive this statement, we have found that this is much more economical for us — as good stewards, we are trying to cut postage expenses from a mass mailing. Let us know if you need the statement sent to you and we will be glad to get it to you. Thanks for your understanding.

**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — FEBRUARY 19th:**

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.

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].

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Brother Paul Kelly, C.S.C., who is under the care of hospice.
- For Joe Norton, father-in-law of Joe Ciuni ['77], and grandfather of Joe ['03], Jane ['04], Tom ['06], and Mike ['08] Ciuni, who is critically ill with complications of COVID

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Sister Loretta May, O.P., former Lower School Director, and sister of Brother John May, C.S.C.
- For Brother Richard Eckhardt, C.S.C.
- For Vincent Matteucci
- For Patrick Augusta ['84]
- For Elaine Willey, sister of Father John [anniversary]
- For Dennis Kavran, husband of Charlene, father of Dennis ['86] and Jennifer ['95] Kavran, grandfather of Adam ['14] and Madeleine ['16] Miller [anniversary]
- For Vidmant Joseph Prikockis, father of Larry Prikockis ['88]
- For Charles Graham, father of Kim Graham.
- For Daniel Perez
- For Cathleen Fitzgerald, wife of Bill ['52] Fitzgerald, sister of Terry Clyne ['65], and sister-in-law of Thomas Fitzgerald ['65]
- For Helen Sheridan
- For Mildred Dennis, mother of Business Office Associate, Donna Skufca
- For Brother Joseph Annan, C.S.C.
- For Larry Lavelle, brother of Brother Robert Lavelle, C.S.C., who is under hospice care.
- For Kevin Behm
- For Mary Clavin
- For Father José Prado, C.S.C.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For Thomas ['65] and Carolyn Brigham, and Hannah LeBerteaux ['05], whose homes were destroyed in the Colorado fire.
- For all those suffering from COVID.
- 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.

THE TRUTH:

We are all capable of good and evil. We are not born bad; everybody has something good inside. Some hide it, some neglect it, but it is there. God created us to love and to be loved, so it is our test from God to choose one path or the other.

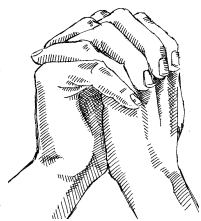
— Mother Teresa

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

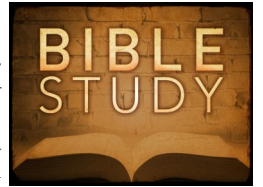
- For Frank Nannicola, grandfather of Cassie [*17], Frank [*18], and Mia [*19] Nannicola, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Helen Murawski, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For John Visconsi, brother of Tom [*61] and Tony Visconsi [*75] and Paulette Poklar, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Sheila Coyne, aunt of Katie Coyne [*24], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For William Rogal, father of Jill Thompson, who is recovering from emergency surgery
- For Kelsey Cesar, Yearbook Co-Ordinator, who is recovering from shoulder surgery.
- For Carol Patton, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Cassandra Williams [*15], sister of Sebastian Williams [*18] who is undergoing treatment for inoperable 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 recovering from a bone marrow transplant
- For Ray Gruss who is battling cancer.
- For Mary Curran, mother of Megan [*10], Carolyn [*12], and Catherine [*17] Curran, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- 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 Christine Maharg, mother of Lily Maharg [*21], who is seriously ill with 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 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, JAN. 19th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, January 19th 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: The power of Light in Scripture**



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, January 16: 2 nd Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, January 17:	NO MASS
Tuesday, January 18:	NO MASS
Wednesday, January 19:	4:15 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]
Thursday, January 20:	NO MASS
Friday, January 21:	NO MASS
Saturday, January 22: 3 rd Week in Ordinary Time	NO MASS
Sunday, January 23 3 rd Week in Ordinary Time	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.



BOW AND ARROW

Patience is more than endurance. A saint’s life is in the hands of God like a bow and arrow in the hands of an archer. God is aiming at something the saint cannot see, and He stretches and strains, and every now and again the saint says: “I cannot stand anymore.” God does not heed, He goes on stretching till His purpose is in sight, then He lets fly. Trust yourself in God’s hands. — Oswald Chambers

REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

We have just completed celebrating the Christmas Season — the Birth of Jesus, the Epiphany, and the Baptism of Jesus. To many this season is known in this day and age as “The Holidays”. We spent Advent preparing for the “Holidays” and still there remains the spiritual preparation for living the life that Jesus was born into and now shares with us and through us. The Savior has come, we have sung the songs, heard the poems, and venerated the stories of Scripture. Now during these next six and a half weeks of Ordinary Time before Ash Wednesday, we are encouraged to receive the opportunities to live with all the gifts of these “holidays” materially, relationally, and spiritually.

Reflection is an important human process — we reflect gratefully on all the gifts that we have received, and the joys that we have in sharing them and continuing their distribution. It is all part of settling down to live the new life brought to us at Jesus’ birth.

Let us ask the Lord to open our eyes — as were those of the Apostles — at the workings of God in our lives. They were new at this — and he was new to them. They had much to learn — as do we. We need to be open to the changes which need to happen within us. Grace changes our human water into living wine. God is always doing a “new thing”, and we are God’s work of art. We need to accept that, and share it out like the fine wine Jesus offered the guests at the Wedding Feast.

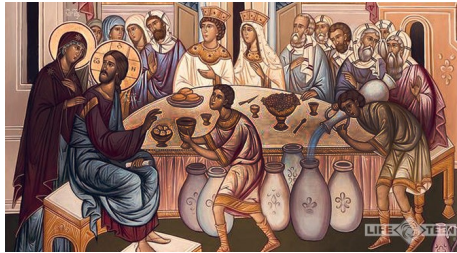
Our Scripture reflection for this 2nd Week in Ordinary Time begins with the Prophet Isaiah [62:1-15]. Isaiah is speaking to and about the city of Jerusalem. The old city has been dis-graced by its infidelities and subsequent embarrassments by foreign invaders. Now it is time to begin anew. Isaiah tells the people that God is going to give them — symbolized by the city — a new name. Actually, God will give them several new names and new images which will reveal the steadfast love which God has always had for her. What was, will be something new. Jerusalem — and so all of Israel with her — will be known as “not abandoned”, but embraced, espoused, and married. The old will become an historical fact. What God will make of her will become a precious jewel in the crown of God. Israel’s creation as a beloved nation was a new experience of God’s love. The prophet proclaims an even newer creation of Israel as “married” by the God who also calls her the “sought for.”

Throughout this Liturgical year, we are going to journey with Jesus through the eyes of St. Luke’s Gospel. But before we do this, John gives us a picture of Jesus which will become a frame for our journey.

John begins the ministry of Jesus at the Wedding Feast at Cana [John 2:1-12]. John opens his Gospel with the three words which open the Book of Genesis — “In the Beginning.” This “wedding” is the first revelational gesture of Jesus, and so is the “new beginning.” Creation, according to Genesis, took six days — there are six stone jars to be filled with water. In Genesis, the Creating God breathed over the waters and brought about the stones of creation. Jesus breathes over the water of chaos and the wine of life is revealed.

There is more. Mary asks Jesus to do something about this quite human condition — she stands waiting and watching, but his “hour” has not yet come. She will be standing, waiting and watching at the foot of the cross when his “hour” does arrive [John 19:25]. On April 15th — Good Friday — we will witness the “hour” or time of the great “glorification,” when Jesus pours out his life on the cross. In John’s Gospel, John foreshadows this event by placing here in the beginning of his gospel. The “wedding” is not about marriage — but about something new, some change, some “beginning.”

This miracle has to do with changing chaos into order, but even more, it presents Jesus as the new “breath of God.” Jesus is the “new wine,” the new “creation” which is more than stone — he is compassion for the human condition of not having, being empty, needy. Mary as the “new Eve,” the

**THE HIGH DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE:**

Every three years we return to the early Christian practice of having a three feast celebration of Jesus’ Epiphany — the coming of the magi, Jesus’ baptism, and the wedding feast of Cana. In each, Jesus is revealed to those around him as being someone exceptional — a person who has qualities beyond those which normal human beings possess. There’s a “coming out” — an epiphany — of Jesus.

John’s Gospel presents us with the Cana narrative [John 2:1-12]. Jesus is certainly revealed here as being exceptional. Yet, according to experts in John’s gospel, the evangelist originally had more in mind than just pointing out that aspect of Jesus of Nazareth.

One of John’s well-known themes is that Christianity is superior to Judaism. No doubt the evangelist would have loved the song from the 1940’s musical *Annie Get Your Gun* — “Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Better”. In discussing John’s Gospel, CH Dodd frequently reminded his students that “John’s Jesus replaces the water of Judaism with the win of Christianity.” Because Dodd understood that once Jewish purification jugs were desecrated with win, they could no longer be employed for religious purification rituals, this was a case of the inferior being successfully replaced by the superior.

Ironically, as Isaiah relates, Jews believed that they were superior to other people — “You shall be a glorious crown in the hand of the Lord, a royal diadem held by your God” [Isaiah 62:1-15]. Can’t get much more superior than that.

Yet both John and Paul would say: “Yes you can! Your faith in Jesus raises you above any other faith — even Judaism.” For Paul that especially means receiving the Spirit’s unique gifts. Though different, each is a manifestation of that Spirit in our daily lives. The realization that followers of the risen Jesus share in his/her Spirit was one of the pivotal insights of the early Christian community [1 Corinthians 12:4-11]. Just as the historical Jesus was gifted by the spirit, so now his disciples are gifted by that same Spirit.

Brainwashed by the seven gifts of the Spirit we had to memorize for Confirmation, most of us have never reflected on Paul’s nine spiritual gifts. The traditional seven “Confirmation gifts” don’t even come from the Christian Scriptures. Six of the seven are found in Isaiah [see Isaiah 11], and have nothing to do with Jesus’ Spirit. They’re the gifts an ideal Jewish king is expected to possess.

I suspect that we’ve traditionally replaced Paul’s gifts with Isaiah’s for the same reason that the Apostle referred to them in his Letter to the Church at Corinth. In this particular case, some Corinthian Christians mistakenly believed that all authentic followers of Jesus should be gifted with tongues, while others had it up to their eyebrows with Corinthian tongue talkers constantly interrupting community gatherings with their “holy gibberish.”

Tension or no tension, Paul not only names the nine gifts — he also mentions that the Spirit has given them to specific individuals “for some benefit.” He expects us to work through the tensions for the common good.

Following John’s theology, if we’re superior to Judaism, we should expect to have more tensions in our faith life than Judaism. We’ve got more gifts. It’s no accident that when Luke described the Spirit’s Pentecost arrive in the Book of Acts, he hooked it up with wind, fire and noises — all stressful symbols [see Acts 2].

It is clear through the centuries that many of us have surrendered our tension-filled superiority to a non-spiritual, peaceful existence — an existence that Paul and John would have judge inferior.

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

RIGHT LIVING:

What separates privilege from entitlement is gratitude.

—Brene Brown

Knowing this, we should live our lives fully enjoying what is earthly and earthly. The beauties and pleasures of this life are a gift from God, meant to be enjoyed. But, by being aware of their source, we can also then be free enough to accept the very real limits that life puts on our desires. And, better still, we need not fear death since what we lose will be trumped one-hundredfold by what we gain.

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

THE ROLE OF MARY IN THE LIFE OF JESUS:

Our Lady has interceded for those who approach her divine Son from the very beginning of his public life and ministry. Mary was invited to a wedding at Cana, and “Jesus also was invited to the marriage with his disciples” [John 2:1-12]. Our Lady informs Jesus: “they have no more wine”. Though he hesitates, saying: “My hour has not yet come”, yet he accedes to her wishes and the needs of the wedding guests and changes water into wine upon our Lady’s instruction to the servants: “Do whatever he tells you.” We also are invited by our Lady to render obedience to her Son. Holiness consists in this — obeying Christ in all things.

In the public life of Jesus, Mary appears prominently — at the very beginning when at the marriage feast of Cana, moved with pity, she brought about by her intercession the beginning of the miracles of Jesus the Messiah [see John 2]. In the course of her Son’s preaching she received the words whereby, in extolling a kingdom beyond the concerns and ties of flesh and blood, he declared blessed those who heard and kept the word of God [see Mark 3:35 and Luke 11:27-28]. Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood [see John 19] in line with the divine plan, enduring with her only begotten Son the intensity of his passion, with his sacrifice, associating herself in her mother’s heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim which was born of her. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross as a mother to his disciple, with these words: “Woman, behold your son” [John 19: 26-27]. At Cana, Mary appears once more as the Virgin in prayer: when she tactfully told her Son of a temporal need. She also obtained an effect of grace — namely, that Jesus, in working the first of his “signs”, confirmed his disciples’ faith in him.



Why are Mary’s prayers so effective with God? The prayers of the saints are prayers of servants, whereas Mary’s are a Mother’s prayer — whence flows their efficacy and their authority. And since Jesus has immense love for his Mother, she cannot pray without being listened to. To understand Mary’s great goodness, let us remember what the Gospel says — there was a shortage of wine, which naturally worried the married couple. No one asks the Blessed Virgin to intervene and request her Son to come to the rescue of the couple; it stirs her to act as intercessor and ask her Son for the miracle, even though no one asks her to. If our Lady acted like this without being asked, what would she not have done if they actually asked her to intervene? By God’s design Mary is uniquely a Mediatrix for us — our Mother in the order of grace — just as she was for the wedding guests at Cana.

—taken from the writings of Father Kevin Cusick 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.



Mother of Life, plays her part as did the “old Eve” in Genesis. Mary is saying to Jesus, “They have no real life.” The former Eve was pictured as offering a taste of what “real” life might be. Mary echoes the longings of the prophets for the “real” life, the “breath” of God. The “wine” which is offered to the headwaiter is tasted by him and is reckoned unusual. The usual way is good wine first, then inferior after folks have had more than a little. John is presenting Jesus as a late wine, but more fulfilling.

This story in John’s Gospel is a second Prologue — the first prologue appears at the beginning of John’s Gospel [1:1-14]. John presents Jesus not as a replacement of the older covenants, but as a completion of them. As water gives life, wine gives life to life. Jesus will offer that life to the lives of the Woman at the Well, the Man Born Blind, Nicodemus, the Man at the Pool, Lazarus, and eventually and ultimately to the world from the fountain of the cross. This will be his “hour” or time of Jesus’ greatest revelation of his infinite love for our human condition of trying to live on water alone.

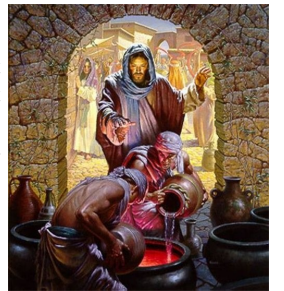
We still do not have enough wine and these next weeks of liturgical prayer will lead us closer to the source. God is still breathing over our chaos and Jesus is still offering the wine of life to us. That life is meant to be lived with the sober sense that our lives are sacraments meant to be poured out, distributed as wine was offered to the guests. We are the stewards and Jesus is the wine. These are our drinking days.

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

THE FIRST SIGN:

The first part of John’s Gospel is constructed around seven progressively more remarkable signs done by Jesus, culminating in the raising of Lazarus, which reveal him as the Son of God sent to establish the new era of divine blessings in the world. The Wedding Feast at Cana [John 2:1-12] is the first of the seven signs.

Jesus, along with his mother and his disciples, is at a wedding feast. His Mother — she is never named in John’s Gospel — suggests to Jesus that they have no wine. Jesus seems to put her off, but then responds to her request by ordering the servants to fill six stone water jugs, holding twenty to thirty gallons filled to the brim. When the water turned to wine is taken to the headwaiter, he says to the bridegroom that everyone serves the good wine first, but “you have kept the good wine until now.” The evangelist then tells us that this first sign done by Jesus revealed his glory and moved his disciples to begin to believe in him.



For us today, the Cana story — rich in symbolism — reminds us of some of the fundamental claims of our Christian faith — Jesus is the Son of God sent into the world to inaugurate a new era of divine blessing; his glory, initially manifested at Cana, was fully revealed in his supreme hour of glory when he was raised up on the cross; through his death and resurrection he sent the Holy Spirit to all of us as a superabundant resource that is always renewable and never runs out; and Jesus set the stage for a community that would rejoice in his continuing presence.

There are people who know from experience the spiritual truths suggested by the sign performed at Cana. A convert to Catholicism, who went through the RCIA program — now called the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults [OCIA] — just loves participating in the liturgy, which has an amazing power to lift her spirits and gladden her heart. A middle-aged couple did a Marriage Encounter which brought new life to their marriage and revealed unrecognized gifts in each other. A married man who was having an affair with his secretary broke it off, went to Confession, and felt like a new man with a clean slate and a fresh opportunity to form a more satisfying relationship with his wife. A youth minister, who read the apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, is very excited about sharing such an uplifting presentation of the Christian faith with her students.

Have you experienced the uplifting power of the Christ’s grace? How can you share this gift with others?

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

MARY'S ROLE IN THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL:

The episode in the life of Jesus in which he attended the wedding in the village of Cana is well-known. Who hasn't heard of the miracle of the water changed into wine? Moreover, as Saint John said, it was "the first of his signs." [John 2:1-12]. But what does this "the first of his signs" mean? Was it just a small miracle, done only to see if it would work? — a first attempt, not too spectacular, in case it would fail? Obviously not! Far from it!

But this is the first miracle! What is interesting is that certain apocryphal Gospels invented a large quantity of miracles that they claim Jesus performed during his childhood. Before he performed his first miracle, Jesus knew, in the Holy Spirit who favors the communication between the Word of God and Jesus-Man, that this miracle was for him something absolutely necessary and realizable.

What is interesting about this first miracle is that Jesus does not perform this miracle entirely on his own — Mary, his Mother, intervenes. Of course, it is the divine Power of Jesus the Son of God that will produce the miracle and change water into wine. But this divine Power wants to act in response to prayer: Mary believes that her Son is able to perform a miracle and so she asks him to do so, simply by telling him that the wedding guests did not have any more wine. Thereafter, each time Jesus performs a miracle, the faith and prayer of a person will have first invited the Power of God to manifest itself through an exemption from the laws of nature — that is, through a miracle.

At first glance, Jesus' use of the term "Woman" to address his mother, appears to be disrespectful. But in Jesus' time, this is a very common term. There is no doubt that in Jesus' life, Mary holds a privileged place — one that is unique, in the History of Salvation. In the light of faith, Mary, who is first the model of the Church, is also, in a certain sense, the entire accomplishment and the fullness of the Body of Christ. St. Louis-Mary Grignon of Montfort clearly says: if all of the members of the Mystical Body of Christ live in Christ, with Him, by Him and for Him, then they also live in Mary, with Her, by Her, and for Her. Also, as the Church is the mystical Bride of Christ, Mary, as the Church, is also the Bride of Christ, and it is in this sense that Jesus, at the wedding of Cana, refers to Mary as "Woman" rather than "Mother". Moreover, since husband and wife are one, it is truly in this way that Jesus intends to perform his first miracle — with Mary, his Mother, and not without her!

In order for Jesus to perform his first miracle, Mary asked her Son to act, and she reiterated to him all her faith. But what can Mary do alone? Alone, Mary is but a believer among believers — although she is the first among them. But Mary in union with the rest of the faithful becomes, in a way, the entire Body of Christ, and goes from being the Mother to becoming the Spouse of Christ, in order to work with her Son, to collaborate, through her faith, in the Work of God. It is for this reason that Mary needs our aid. Thus, she says to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you." And the servants associated themselves to the faith of Mary through their obedience to the commands of Christ. Doesn't obedience produce miracles?

What strikes the head waiter of the feast concerning the wine that is presented to him now, towards the end of the meal, is its quality — he finds it better than all the other wine that had been served until then! Truly, the head waiter of the feast is surprised by this departure from custom — "Every one serves the good wine first; and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus clearly showed that human tradition is not the Tradition of God!

This is the first miracle! This is a seed of faith in the soul of the disciples of the Lord! Soon, the Holy Spirit will descend upon the Apostles and disciples. Mary will be there too, in the Cenacle, on that day of the first Pentecost! Mary will have prayed with them in order that the Power of the Almighty, who had already come upon her on the day of the Annunciation, might pour itself upon the disciples of her Son and allow them to perform their own first miracles. Truly, the disciples of the Lord believed in him and



THE GOD OF OUR DESIRES:

What lies deepest inside authentic faith is the truth that God is the object of all human desire — no matter how earthly and unholy that desire might seem at times. This implies that everything we desire is contained in God. We see this expressed in the Psalms which tell us that God is the object of our desires, and in Jesus, who tells us that it is in God that our deepest hungers and thirsts will be satiated. And so we pray, without perhaps ever really being conscious of what we are saying: My soul longs for you in the night; You, Lord, alone, can fill my heart; You, O Lord, are my all [see Psalm 42]. But is it really God that we are longing for in the night and aching for in our desires?

Do we really believe that God is the real object of our desires? When we look at all that is beautiful, full of life, attractive, sexually alluring, and pleasurable on earth, do we really think and believe that this is contained in an infinitely richer way inside of God and inside the life into which God invites us? Do we really believe that the joys of heaven will surpass the pleasures of earth, and that, already in this world, the pleasures of virtue trump the sensations of sin? Do we really believe that faith will give us what we desire?

It would seem not. We — and most everyone else — struggle to turn our attention towards God. We find religious practice and prayer more of a disruption to life than an entry into it, more a duty than an offer, more an asceticism than a joy, and more as something that has us missing out on life than entering into its depths. In most of us, if we are honest, there is a secret envy of those who recklessly plumb sacred energy for their own pleasure — that is, we doggedly do our duty in committing ourselves to something higher, but, like the Older Brother of the Prodigal Son, we mostly serve God out of obligation and are bitter about the fact that many others do not. This side of eternity, virtue often envies sin and, truth be told, this is particularly true regarding sexuality.

But partly this is natural and a sign of health, given that the brute reality of our physicality and the pressures of the present moment naturally impose themselves on us in a way that can make the things of God and spirit seem abstract and unreal. That is simply the human condition, and God, no doubt, understands. You would have to be a true mystic to be above this.

However it can be helpful to tease out more explicitly something we profess in faith — namely, that all that we find attractive, beautiful, irresistible, erotic, and pleasurable here on earth is found, even more fully, inside of its source, God. God is better looking than any movie star. God is more intelligent than the brightest scientist or philosopher. God is more witty and funny than the best of our comedians. God is more creative than any artist, writer, or innovator in history. God is more sophisticated than the most-learned person on earth. God is more exuberant than any young person. God is more popular than any rock star. And, not least, God is more erotic and sexually attractive than any woman, man, or sexual image on earth. We don't ordinarily think that or believe this about God, but those statements are as much dogma as are the strictest church-doctrines on record. Everything that is alluring on earth is inside of God — in even a richer form, since God is its author.

However that does not take away the power of earthly things to allure — nor should it. Countless things can overwhelm us with their stunning reality — a beautiful person, a sunset, a piece of music, a work of art, youthful exuberance, a baby's innocence, someone's wit, feelings of intimacy, feelings of nostalgia, a glass of wine on the right evening, a stirring in our sexuality, or, most deeply of all, an inchoate sense of the uniqueness and preciousness of our own lives. We need to honor those things, and thank God for the gift, even as we make ourselves aware that all of this is found more-richly inside of God and that we lose nothing when virtue, religion, and commitment ask us to sacrifice these things for something higher. Jesus, himself, promises that whatever we give up for what is higher will be given back to us one hundredfold.



THE HOUR HAS COME:

“My hour has not yet come.” Don’t try to use that excuse with your mother! It didn’t even work for Jesus. The actual story of the Wedding at Cana could have been a wedding story that John picked up from the oral tradition. But whenever John retold an anecdote, every detail and word assumed layers of meaning. Just as the Josephs of Scripture were famous for dream interpretation, John knew how to uncover depth in every facet of an incident better than the finest jeweler can appreciate a cut diamond. Thus, today we hear about wine at a wedding, and God’s gift to a people who had lost touch with joy.

The story starts out simply. Mary and Jesus and friends were at a wedding celebration. But the subject is not really the wedding. John tells us nothing about the goodness and aim of marriage. We have no idea who the newlyweds are. We know nothing about the ceremony, the dress, the music. No society page would pick up the story John tells. If the tale were to be published, it would probably go in the “Believe It or Not” section of the paper.

Here is the short version. Two people are supposed to be enjoying the happiest day of their lives with all their friends, and the wine runs out. That’s not just an embarrassment — it could be a terrible omen. If there was too little wine at the wedding, what else will be lacking to the marriage? Who is to blame? The parents, godparents, steward? Maybe the people who drank too much from the get-go? Sure, blame can be spread all around, but even if a culprit is found, there is still no wine.

But for one woman — Mary, the woman who taught Jesus to pray. She will not just sit back and watch the feast fizzle. She finds Jesus and announces: “They have no wine.” Whether she used only those words or made them the centerpiece of a cajoling mother’s entreaty, she got her point across.

Unfortunately, what she saw as a problem didn’t fit Jesus’ master plan. At this point, John the Evangelist begins to write as much between the lines as in the text. Jesus says: “Woman, how is that our problem? My hour has not yet come.” Jesus doesn’t call her “immah” [mom], nor does he use her name as if he were addressing her with formal distance. No, the Greek says he called her “gune” [woman] as if she represented all of Israel, God’s own bride. John is framing this incident as a symbolic depiction of God’s people who have run out of joy.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus does not teach about prayer as in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We might see Mary here as an image of Luke’s persistent widow and the friend who comes in the night or the Syrophenician woman of Mark and Matthew’s Gospels. Like the psalmists who plea: “For the sake of your name, hear my cry!” Mary believes that God’s name is too great, God’s generosity is too famous to allow people to remain joyless and ashamed.

“My hour has not yet come” — Jesus’ reply was not enough for Mary. Representing her people, representing her needy world, she simply told the servants to do what Jesus bid them, knowing that when that happened, all would be well.

Two millennia later, Martin Luther King Jr. picked up Mary’s theme in his book, *Why We Can’t Wait*. He wrote: “Time itself is neutral; it can be used destructively or constructively.” Like Mary telling the servants to obey Jesus, King said: “Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of people willing to be co-workers with God.” King wrote about the change that was past due for people of African descent in the United States. Like him, women and impoverished people in the Catholic Church are saying that necessary changes can’t wait for the “right time” because when it comes to reform, that time never arrives.

As we enter into a new church year, Mary of Nazareth — the persistent guest at Cana — urges us to believe that the hour has come. The hour has come for us to believe that the reign of God can be palpable in our midst. The hour has come for us to listen to the urgings of the Spirit. The hour has come for the church to become genuinely synodal, appreciating and listening to the voice of each of her members — especially those on the margins. The hour has come for all of us to be co-workers with God and to listen to the Gospel. The hour has come to look at Christ and do whatever he tells us. Then we will know the joy God intends for humanity.

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

came to the aid of Mary so that, by Her and with Her, the Church would be born and see the light of day, in order that it might ceaselessly grow until the fullness of time!

Mary needs each one of us to collaborate in the Work of her Son. Let us not hesitate to deeply believe and to pray with perseverance in order for the Kingdom of God to come and for the Glory of the Lord to be poured forth throughout the entire the Universe!

—taken from the writings of Father Daniel Meynen, which appear on the internet

THE WEDDING AS THE ETERNAL FEAST:

Mary’s comment to Jesus that “they have no wine,” is more than a simple observation. Wine in the Bible is associated with joy. For sure, to drink wine to excess was shameful, but the enjoyment of wine with family and friends was a great gift. In fact, the prophet Isaiah himself says: “On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich foods and pure, choice wines” [see Isaiah 25]. Isaiah goes on to say that eternal life is like a wedding banquet. We will have resurrected bodies so there may be some type of true physical enjoyment. Mary, the mother of Jesus and the mother of Christians, wants her children to have joy. But how do we get there?

Well, consider Mary’s next words: “Do whatever he tells you”. If we do what Jesus tells us we will in fact have joy. God made us composite creatures with a physical body and a spiritual dimension — a soul, that inner core that enables us to turn toward God or away from him. When we turn to God, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we experience peace.

Some things don’t bring peace — for example, hours of scrolling on a cell phone. Turning to God in silence however does lead to tranquility. That’s the reason why during the pandemic, while overall mental health declined, one group did experience an overall improvement of mental health — those who attended religious services weekly. Turning to God causes things to find their correct place.

Regarding our bodies we have seen that people fall into extremes. On one hand, people say their bodies don’t matter — only their mind counts. On the other hand, some simply abandon themselves to bodily urges. Finding the right balance is hard. I think St. Francis got it right. He referred to his body as “Brother Ass” or “Brother donkey”. To be useful, a donkey has to let its owner guide it. Just so, things go right when a person guides and controls his or her body, and when God guides and controls their soul. That is why Mary said: “Do whatever he tells you.”

Now, I admit am far from that ideal. I’ve stumbled along, trying to get up when I fall. Still, I know the truth of what the headwaiter says: “you have kept the good wine until now.” The joy I’ve experienced up to this time seems small by comparison.

I think a lot of married couples experience something similar. In spite of the increasing infirmities of old age, they know a peace they didn’t imagine earlier. Like is better when we keep doing what God tells us. People who try to construct their own happiness, more often wind up with vinegar rather than choice wine.

I think of poor Madonna. I don’t want to pick on her, but she does exemplify so much our culture. She’s now in her mid-sixties and like a lot of women that age she continues to be beautiful (like the ladies here). But in one photo meant to shock people she’s wearing a provocative outfit, trying to look enticing. Instead she looks lonely and desperate. I pray that she will return to Jesus who her parents introduced her too - and to Mary, the Madonna she was named for.

Picture, if you will, a woman or man holding their grandchild. They may not have had a perfect marriage — and like every family they have their dysfunctions. But they kept asking Jesus’ help to build a family.

When we turn to Jesus, we find our true purpose. In John’s Gospel, we see Jesus at a wedding banquet, celebrating with a young married couple [John 2:1-12]. Most discover their fundamental vocation in the sacrament of matrimony. Some are called to spiritual marriage of priesthood or religious life. Still others to consecrated single life at service of others. We each have something unique to offer. As St. Paul says: “To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit” [1 Corinthians 12:4-11]. Jesus is counting on you for something no one else can do. You have a unique purpose.

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



LOOKING FOR THE BEST WINE:

There is more than one way to answer a question. There is more than one perspective through which we can view life. A young psychologist was given a task of administering a new psychological test that was meant to show mental flexibility of elderly people. His first patient was a 91-year-old man. When the man came in, the psychologist carefully explained that this would be a verbal test and that some of the questions were very easy, and others were rather difficult. He asked the man whether he was ready to begin. “Let’s go,” the elderly gentleman said. “Ok,” said the psychologist, “this is the first question. Can you name two days of the week that begin with ‘T’?” “That’s easy,” said the man, “today and tomorrow.” The psychologist paused for a few moments, wrote a few notes, shuffled his papers, and said: “Well let’s go on to the second question. Now this one is much more difficult. Can you tell me how many seconds there are in a year?” Without batting an eye, the man responded: “twelve.” “Twelve!” said the psychologist. “Yes,” said the elderly man with confidence, “the 2nd of January, the 2nd of February, the 2nd of March, and so on.”

There is more than one way to answer a question, and there is more than one perspective through which we can live life. This is an important insight because it means that since there is more than one way, we must choose which answer will be our answer and which perspective we will adopt.

Now in the Gospel for this 2nd Week in Ordinary Time, Jesus gives us a perspective through which we can view life — a very optimistic one. In John’s Gospel about the story of the wedding feast at Cana, the key line is the one uttered by the chief steward — “You have kept the best wine until now” [John 2:1-12]. The good wine was not served first; the good wine was served last. The pattern of that Jesus creates, therefore, tells us that we are moving forward, that things are getting better.

John’s Gospel reminds us that we as Christians believe in an optimistic view of the world. Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection we do not feel that we are falling backwards; rather, we are moving forward. We are moving forward to what is the best possible thing — the establishment of the kingdom of God. We believe that God is leading us not to something inferior, but to something wonderful — that the best wine is not behind us, but before us. Jesus presents this optimistic message to us today. The question is do we believe it. Can we buy into such a positive view, or will we insist on a more pessimistic approach?

In this light I would like to suggest to you two questions for you to reflect upon this week. The first question is this – Do you believe that the world is moving forward or backward? Do you believe that human civilization is becoming better or worse? There are different ways to answer that question. Certainly, if you center in on some of the horrors of recent times such as the Holocaust, Hiroshima, or genocide in Africa, a pessimistic answer seems appropriate. But is that pessimism the only perspective which is possible?

There is a French theologian by the name of René Gérard who has made it his life’s work to chronicle the positive developments in history. In Gérard’s view, such forward movement is a sign of God acting in our world. Gérard would argue that we who live in the world today have more potential for a good life than any other generation before us — that it is better living in the 21st century than in the 12th century or the 2nd century. This is certainly because we have electricity, air conditioning, medical advancements, and education. But Gérard points out that the progress is not simply in science and material things. He asserts that there are more people living in the world today who respect the rights of others than at any other time in human history. That there are more people living in the world today who believe that every human being has a value — even if that human being is not of my family, or of my tribe, or of my country.

Now is that attitude universal? Not at all. It might not even be the majority of the people in the

condition. The reality is that we are never alone. God knows; God cares; God is with us. We have to trust in his Word. The changing of the water into wine leads us to a consideration of the New World of Jesus Christ. This is a world where the ordinary becomes extraordinary. It is a world where simple people become great spiritual leaders. It is a world where the least important in society is raised up with dignity to become the most important in the Kingdom. Recall Mary’s prayer: “My soul magnifies the Lord. As a result, all generations will call me blessed” [See Luke 1]. If we allow ourselves to magnify the Lord, to be epiphanies of the Lord, we also will be blessed. That is why we have to be careful that we don’t get so bogged down with the sham events of our materialistically depraved world that we miss the really important events taking place. Look around. Children and Teens are proclaiming the presence of God.

Adults are reaching out to his presence in others. We are being enriched by his love in our families. For the Christian, the extraordinary is ordinary. It is quite normal for the water of the world to become the wine of Christ. John’s Gospel is telling us that we live in miraculous times. Jesus is transforming our world through the blood of his cross. Our society may glorify violence and have no respect for life. Violent video games, assault rifles, the degradation of women by the sex industry, as well as and particularly the Supreme Court’s horrific *Roe vs Wade* decision — all can all lead us to be pessimistic for the future of our country and the world. But Jesus tells us that we don’t need to be so negative.

There is no room for pessimism in Christianity. St. Paul said that Jesus Christ is not alternately “yes and no, but only yes” [2 Corinthians 1:19]. The miracle of Cana is an epiphany. The Savior of the World has come. Just as He transformed water into wine, and wine into blood, He is transforming our world into the Kingdom of God. We have been given the grace to be members of that Kingdom, and the mandate to bring the Good News of God, the Gospel, to the world.

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

ATTENDANCE:

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a form [name, address, phone number, children, etc.] indicating this fact, if you have not already done so. Such information not only helps us to know who is attending Our Lady Chapel; it also is of great assistance to us in record keeping [for our friend, the IRS] of any contributions which you may make.

CHAPEL ENVELOPES:

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

WEEKLY OFFERING:

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

Offerings-----[Friday, December 31]-----[New Year’s Eve]-----	\$ 80.00
Offerings-----[Saturday, January 1]-----[Weekly Mail-in]-----	\$ 1,210.00
Offerings-----[Sunday, January 2]-----	\$ 447.00
Offerings-----[Saturday, January 8]-----[Weekly Mail-in]-----	\$ 1,480.00
Offerings-----[Sunday, January 9]-----	\$ 901.00

GRATITUDE:

Gratitude is the closest thing to beauty manifested in an emotion.

—Mindy Kaling



FROM WATER TO WINE TO BLOOD:

Two weeks ago we celebrated the Solemnity of the Epiphany. In the Roman rite of the Catholic Church we emphasize the visit of the three wise men. But the prayers for the Mass and The Liturgy of the Hours of the Epiphany point to more than the wise men's journey to Bethlehem. For example the antiphon for Mary's Prayer two weeks ago was: "Three mysteries mark this holy day — today the star leads the Magi to the infant Christ; today water is changed into wine for the wedding feast; today Christ wills to be baptized by John in the river Jordan to bring us salvation." So last Sunday when we celebrated the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we were celebrating one of the three occurrences of the Epiphany. John's Gospel for this 2nd Week in Ordinary Time provides us with a third epiphany — the changing of water into wine [John 2:1-12].

First of all, the setting — it's a wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. In the Gospel of John, where this passage is found, Jesus had not yet performed any miracles. Mary tells Jesus that there is no wine — that's probably because His disciples were there! Imagine the embarrassment of the groom's family that they could no longer provide for their guests. Jesus says to His mother: "How does this concern of yours affect me? My hour has not yet come." What Mary was presenting to Jesus would have a far deeper effect on the world than solving a simple matter of a lack of wine. If Jesus were to provide wine in a miraculous way, a path would open up that would lead to His passion, death and resurrection, His hour.



But Mary tells the servants of the wine steward to do whatever Jesus says. The hour — the time of the Lord — would begin with this epiphany — this manifestation of His power. In the first epiphany, the star and the magi pointed to Jesus as the King of Kings. In the second epiphany John the Baptist and the voice from heaven revealed Jesus to the world. In this Epiphany, no one points to Jesus — He manifests His glory. Jesus transforms the water into wine, and by doing so he will soon transform wine into His blood. The water that Jesus changes is water that was used for purification rites. People needed to wash their hands and feet to be ready for the meal. Cups and plates and other vessels needed to be washed in a ritualistic way. But this water meant for purification becomes wine pointing to the wine that will later be used for the new purification rite — our sharing in the eternal offering of Christ on the cross by drinking the Eucharistic blood of the Lord.

John's gospel presents the extraordinary transformation of the world begun at Cana. The transformation took place because people trusted in the Word of the Lord. The means for purification from the evil of the world would progress from symbolic washing to sharing in the Blood of Christ, from water to wine to blood. When we receive communion we are participating in the transformation of the world. When we receive communion we are united to the One who died on the Cross for us. Every reception of the Eucharist is a union with the crucified Savior whose blood has defeated the power of evil — not just in the world, but also in our lives. All of us, myself included, need to reflect more on what we are doing when we come up to communion. We cannot allow this extraordinary event to become ordinary even if we receive communion every day. Mary has an instruction for us in this gospel passage — she tells the servants of the wine steward — and she tells us — to trust in Jesus' word. This a simple directive.

Jesus has told us that we will never be alone. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says that he will be with us always. Jesus has told us that God cares for each of us. Recall the story about the sparrows — "are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows" [Matthew 10:29-31]. We need to listen to Mary and trust in the Lord.

Yes, there are times that we feel alone. Henri Nouwen wrote that this was part of the human

world would not accept it. Nevertheless, there are more people believing in human dignity today than at any time before this. Gérard would point to such an advancement as a sign that we are coming closer to the kingdom of God.

Gérard's perspective is worldwide. But we can also look in a more personal direction. This leads to the second question which I would like you to consider this week: Is my life-getting better or worse? Do I see myself moving forward or backward? Again, there are many ways to answer that question. If you happen to be in the midst of some terrible tragedy or loss then your life can certainly seem to be falling apart. Yet there can be another way to answer the question. For example, many of us deal with the diminishment which comes from age as we move to our 40's to our 60's to our 80's. We have less energy, less health, our friends die. How are we to interpret that movement? Is the only viewpoint that we are caught in a downward spiral? Must we believe that with each day there is less and less of life? Not necessarily. It is possible to recognize that even as life diminishes in all these ways, other things are increasing. Moreover, the things which are increasing might be more important things — experience, wisdom, patience, generosity, and thankfulness. If we find that those gifts are increasing, then — even as other gifts diminish — we can claim that the best wine is now.

So those are the two questions which I would like you to reflect on this week. Is the world at large and is my personal life-becoming better or worse, moving forward or falling backward? Jesus tells us that the best things are in the future, the best wine has not yet to be drunk. We have to choose whether to believe him. I suggest that we make that choice carefully. Because the choice we make will shape our world. It will determine whether we think that we are moving forward into darkness or into light, whether we are moving forward to death or to life.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday:	1 Samuel 15:16-23, Mark 2:18-22
Tuesday:	1 Samuel 16:1-13, Mark 2:23-28
Wednesday:	1 Samuel 17:32-51, Mark 3:1-6
Thursday:	1 Samuel 18:6-19, Mark 3:7-12
Friday:	1 Samuel 24:3-21, Mark 3:13-19
Saturday:	2 Samuel 1:1-27, Mark 3:20-21

3rd Week in Ordinary Time: Nehemiah 8:2-10, 1 Corinthians 12:12-30, Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

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.

**POSSIBILITIES:**

When people's stories are recognized, it does something — it creates a possibility.

—John Powell 9

WHAT'S STOPPING YOU FROM BEING GREAT?

Is there anything in your life that is keeping you from being even greater? A priest once told me that, as a follower of Christ, I was called to be a saint. I attempted to correct the priest explaining: “Father, sainthood is not for me, it is for extraordinary people — folks like Mother Theresa or Pope John Paul II”. I had the mistaken notion that sainthood was for the few rather than the many. I was wrong.

Today — right now — you are being called by God to be holy — and so am I. The “call to holiness” is a fact woven throughout Scripture, but it is difficult and often rejected for one of two reasons. [1] We don’t know what “holy” really means. And [2] we aren’t always honest with ourselves.

Holy does not mean perfect. Holy means “set apart”. The word “holiness” is a word that turns many people off. Some think it is “self-righteous”; others think it means you can’t have any fun; and still other people think “holiness” is something that isn’t realistic in today’s “look out for Number One” society.

When God calls us to be “holy”, it means that He sets us apart — within the world. It doesn’t mean that we ignore the world, other people, or sin — it means that we realize HOW we are to relate to the world. It means that we realize that this world is not our final destination, but that while we are here, we are called to live lives that set us apart from the rest. We are ordinary people who are made extraordinary — not by things we do, but by a Father who claims us and loves us and calls us to live for others.

The reason this call is often ignored, however, is the second reason listed above — and that is that we’re not always honest with ourselves. Self-awareness is a key to true holiness. True self-awareness stems from our understanding that we are sinners, and that darkness — sin — exists in our lives. True saints acknowledge the darkness — they just refuse to be mastered by it — they are constantly drawn to the light — God.

Most sinners think that they are saints; but true saints know that they are sinners. The main difference is their self-awareness — their honesty with God about “where they really are” in relationship to Him.

I know that often times I am not completely honest with myself or with God. Read what St. John wrote: “If we say: ‘We are without sin,’ we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing. If we say: ‘We have not sinned,’ we make God a liar, and His word is not in us” [1 John 1:8-10]. This truth convicts us to constantly — we need to be real with God, acknowledging where our heart and lives really are with Him. God knows our sin. It’s our reaction and response to sin and to darkness, however — choosing instead, the light of God, — that transforms us from sinners into saints.

Choose to live like a saint today, and then, tomorrow, choose to — again. You won’t always be “successful”, but that’s okay — in the words of Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta: “God did not call me to be successful — He called me to be faithful”.

God, remove from my life this day anything that will keep me from sainthood.

—The Bible Geek

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



WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY:

If you’re anything like me, it seems like it has been months since we celebrated Christmas. The busy and rich holy days gave way to New Year’s resolutions, as we returned to work, school, and ministry. Even the memories of our recent celebrations of Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord are quickly fading. And yet, on this Second Week in Ordinary Time, the gospel story of the wedding at Cana forms the third part of a sort of Epiphany trilogy, and carries the themes of these two Christmastide feasts into the green days of Ordinary Time — manifestation and transformation.

These three Epiphany events — the visit of the Magi, the baptism of Jesus by John, and the miracle at Cana — are, as Pope Francis has described them: “the three signs that the liturgy brings in these days in order to speak to us about the manifestation of God — God makes himself known.” As we know, the story of the Magi coming from the East reminds us that the child born in Bethlehem was born for all peoples, and the baptism of Jesus is the revelation that he is the Father’s “beloved Son.” So, then, what do we learn from the miracle at Cana? What truth is revealed in this Sunday’s gospel?

To answer this question, we have to pull back the lens, as it were, to take in a broader view of salvation history.

Throughout the Old Testament, we read of how God continually called straying women and men back into right-relationship with Himself. The Hebrew Scriptures are filled with signs and stories that reveal God’s covenant-love — His relationship — with His Chosen People: the rainbow after the great flood [Genesis 9:1-17], Abraham’s star-filled sky [Genesis 15], the giving of the Law to Moses [Exodus 15 and 24], and the promises made to King David and his descendants [1 Samuel 7:12-13]. Each of these stories remind us that while the People of Israel violated this relationship time and again, God’s love and mercy remained constant. Even the Prophet Isaiah reminds us of God’s abiding and merciful love: “As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so shall your God rejoice in you” [Isaiah 62:1-5].

But those signs and symbols of the Old Testament were only representations of God’s love. On that first Christmas night everything changed. In Jesus — who is the Word-Made-Flesh — God “made his dwelling among us and we have seen his glory” [John 1:14], and the miracle at Cana was the first time that Jesus manifested — remember, this is an Epiphany — his own transforming power and his glory. This is why Adrian Nocent, OSB, could write these beautiful words in his celebrated commentary on the liturgical year: “We were once water, now we are wine, and are judged worthy of the wedding feast. We are being invited, then, to meditate on this renewal of ourselves, of our institutions, and of everything around us, but we must bear in mind that the renewal will come in its fullness only at the wedding feast of the last day.”

Cana marked a beginning and in the transformation of the water into wine, we discover that Jesus wasn’t simply another prophet or holy man. He was God’s “Beloved” and he holds the power to transform — to recreate and renew — the elements of earth and, more importantly, the hearts, minds, and souls of his followers.

In the coming weeks of Ordinary Time, we will hear the stories of how this transforming and saving work — begun in Cana — changed the lives of Jesus’ disciples, as we’re invited to reflect on how that transforming power continues to shape us today.

—taken from the writings of Brother Silas Henderson, S.D.S., which appear on the internet

SOUND ADVICE:

The important thing is not being afraid to take a chance. Remember, the greatest failure is not to try. Once you find something you love to do, be the best at doing it.

—Debbi Fields

