

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

**~ A Prayer of a Stalled Heart ~**

**My heart is cold today, O God,  
I feel no burning desire,  
no zeal to pray  
or be with you.**

**My heart is frozen by the chill of emptiness—  
sluggish and stalled.**

**Send forth your Spirit  
to revive my heart.  
Spark it with a relish for service,  
with a longing to pray.**

**Take me beyond the need to feel  
the reassurance of a lover's heart.  
May I seek to love and serve you,  
even when my wintry heart  
declines to dance  
with springtime grace.**

**Remind me of the ageless truth  
that we become what we pretend to be.  
And as this long day passes,  
may I begin to glimpse a growing warmth  
beyond my words and deeds,  
the marriage of what I would be  
and what I am.**

**And may my desire  
to be your flame of warmth and love  
spark other stalled souls  
to come alive, aflame in you.  
Amen.**

# Our Lady Chapel



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

**CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:**

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

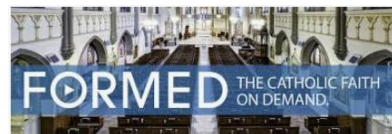
**FEAST OF ST. BLAISE and THE BLESSING OF THROATS:**

In the United States, the annual blessing of throats is a traditional sign of the struggle against illness in the life of the Christian. The blessings is normally bestowed on the Feast of St. Blaise [February 3<sup>rd</sup>], but because we were in the midst of a snow storm this year, **we will bestow the blessing during Mass on this Sunday, February 6<sup>th</sup>.**

Saint Blaise was the Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia during the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Very little is known about his life. What we do know is that prior to becoming a Bishop, he was a doctor. Devotion to him spread throughout the entire Church in the Middle Ages because he was reputed to have miraculously cured a little boy who nearly died because of a fishbone in his throat. From the 8<sup>th</sup> century, he has been invoked on behalf of the sick — especially those afflicted with illnesses of the throat. **The blessing will be given after the Universal Prayer at Sunday's Mass.**

**PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO CHAPEL FAMILIES:**

Through a grant, the Diocese of Cleveland has obtain the wonderful spiritual program called **FORMED**. We are able to participate in this program through St. Francis of Assisi Parish since we lie within their boundaries. **FORMED** has many aspects to it. You can prepare for Sunday Mass by watching an insightful five-minute video by renowned Catholic teachers; you can enjoy a movie with your family that is both nourishing and entertaining; you can enrich your marriage with the award winning video series *Beloved: Finding Happiness in Marriage*; you can help your children grow in character and embrace the beauty and wonder of the Faith; and many more.



**FORMED** provides amazing content 24/7 for you to grow in your faith. **It's free and easy to register.** Go to [stfrancisgmformed.org](http://stfrancisgmformed.org), click "Register" and enter your name, email address, and desired password; if you have previously registered with **FORMED**, you will need to know or update your password. You can only enter **FORMED** this this way. Once you are logged in, you can download the app from the App Store or Google Play Store — just search for **FORMED**. Enjoy. Please contact Father John if you have any questions.

**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — FEBRUARY 19<sup>th</sup>:**

Our Savior Lutheran Church, across the street from Gilmour, has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on **the third Saturday of each month**. They welcome volunteers. If you want to volunteer, they have instituted some **new procedures** because of the Coronavirus. **Thus they help pre-pack nonperishables in bags on Thursday evening beginning at 5 PM.** They continue this prepacking on Friday if needed. Check with Elina Gurney on this. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help putting items from the foodbank into the prepacked bags.** Only volunteers will be allowed in the Church building, so you will be protected against the virus. Clients will remain outside in their cars. **The food pantry is then open from 9:30 AM—1:30 PM on Saturday.**



Our Savior Lutheran's Food Pantry was formed to serve those in emergency situations and/or with on-going need in the cities of Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Highland Heights and Gates Mills. The Food Pantry respects social and cultural diversity and upholds the worth and dignity of those it serves. All those in the area with need will be served equally, as supplies allow. The food pantry is a member of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

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

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For Eric Penick ['71] who is recovering from surgery.
- For Gil Plavcan who is recovering from injuries sustained in a fall.

**FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Darlene Ondi, aunt of Gilmour Service Co-ordinator, Martha Ligas ['09]
- For Matthew Contessa, grandfather of Gilmour's Nature-Based Learning Coordinator, Darci Sanders
- For Daniel Dodson ['95], second-cousin of Kaleigh ['22] and Aiden ['25] McNamara
- For Debbie Gulstrom, sister of Brother Chris Torrijas, C.S.C.
- For Madelyn Price ['77]
- For Brother Paul Kelly, C.S.C.
- For Tom O'Brien ['59], father of Terence O'Brien ['81], brother of Tim ['60] and Dan ['63] O'Brien, uncle of Sean ['89] and Colleen ['92], Matthew ['97], Patrick ['01], Nobert ['06], Michael ['07] O'Brien, great uncle of PJ ['30] O'Brien.
- For Sister Mary Clennon, C.S.C.
- For Rosemary Nagy.
- For Rita Rybalt, wife of Kevin Marrie, ['81], daughter-in-law of Carol Marrie, sister-in-law of Sean ['85] Marrie and Megan Schlickmann ['90].

**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.

**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.

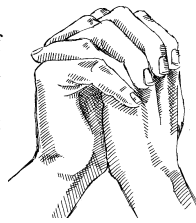


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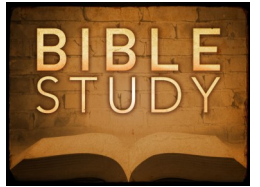
**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For Thomas Hughes, who is in rehab for injuries sustained in a fall.
- For Sister Karita Ivancic, S.N.D., who is recovering from serious eye surgery.
- For Frank Nannicola, grandfather of Cassie [\*17], Frank [\*18], and Mia [\*19] Nannicola, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Helen Murawski, who is under the care of hospice.
- For John Visconsi, brother of Tom [\*61] and Tony Visconsi [\*75] and Paulette Poklar, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For William Rogal, father of Jill Thompson, who is undergoing rehab following 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, FEB. 16<sup>th</sup>:**

**Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM.** Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God’s word. It’s a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can’t come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God’s word. **Our topic for this Bible Study will be: Holy Cross Spirituality — the Charisms [Part 2]**



**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, February 6:<br>5 <sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time    | 10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream |
| Monday, February 7:   | NO MASS                          |
| Tuesday, February 8:  | NO MASS                          |
| Wednesday, February 9:  | 4:15 PM [Eucharistic Chapel]     |
| Thursday, February 10:<br>St. Scholastica                       | NO MASS                          |
| Friday, February 11:  | NO MASS                          |
| Saturday, February 12:<br>6 <sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time | NO MASS                          |
| Sunday, February 13:<br>6 <sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time   | 10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream |

**CAMP GILMOUR 2022:**

Camp Gilmour is back and safer than ever. With nine weeks of new offerings and old favorites for children as young as 3, Camp Gilmour has something for everyone! Join us for Preschool Camp [ages 3-5]; Day Camp [ages 5-12]; sports camps; and experiential camps exploring the fine and performing arts, drones, outdoor adventures, service, engineering and more. **Camps offered June 6-August 5.** Complimentary math and reading enrichment offered each morning for day campers. Before Care available beginning at 7:15 AM and After Care available until 6 PM. Register today at [gilmour.org/summerncamp](http://gilmour.org/summerncamp). 10% discount available thru February 28<sup>th</sup>.





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

A few weeks ago, we read from John's Gospel about Jesus changing water into wine [see John 2:1-11] — a miraculous and a sign of how Jesus would do even more amazing things. As we come to this 5<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time, we see an even more amazing transformation — Jesus is changing a man of the water into a man of the earth; a fisherman into a fisher for humanity. As with many of the persons God has called and Jesus has invited, Peter has a comfortable excuse for his returning to the waters.

We might call this weekend: “Excuse Me Sunday”. We begin with the call of the Prophet Isaiah [6:1-8]. Isaiah is in the midst of a vision — he is standing in the “holy of Holies”, when something special happens. He sees the Lord God sitting on His throne in Heaven. Amid the holy smoke and terrifying chanting of the attendants at the throne, Isaiah declares his unworthiness and unclean state to be seen before the Holy One. He makes the assumption that he is going to be condemned.

But the opposite happens. The fire-carrying spirits descend with a burning coal and touch his unclean lips. He hears their words that his lips are clean, and then he hears the Lord ask whether or not there is anybody whom the Lord can send. This seems to be a simple announcement, and so Isaiah responds that he is available — but he didn't ask “what he was being sent for”.

What Isaiah will learn later is that his mission is challenging. Isaiah will admit that he lives among people who, like him, have “unclean lips”. He is to be missioned to say hard things to Israel. His message is one of “doom and gloom”, and it will not change until the people are willing to listen [see Isaiah 6:9-12]. Isaiah, after hearing this, would feel even more the “woe is me” that he spoke while standing within the vision of God.

Peter must have been a good fisherman. He had partners, a boat, and nets. So Peter, too, had a very good excuse. But the fact is that during this night, Peter and his friends have come of “fishless”. For whatever reason, Peter accepts Jesus' invitation to go back out and try again, and his “fishful netting” certainly grabs his attention [Luke 5:1-11]. When Peter sees how great the catch of fish was, he kneels down before Jesus and states his truth — that he is a sinful man in the presence of a holy man. Jesus, it is important to note, does not deny Peter's truth. Rather — in a manner to which Peter will become accustomed — Jesus invites Peter to follow Him. As his following Jesus unfolds, Peter will find out even more clearly just how sinful he is, and how compassionate Jesus is.

What is interesting here is that Luke has two other passages where persons find their prayer-place at the feet of Jesus. There is the man who tortured himself in the tombs [see Luke 8:26-34], and Mary, the sister of Martha, sits at the feet of Jesus relaxing and reflecting on his words [see Luke 10:38-42].

So, Peter asks Jesus to depart, because he, himself, knows he is a sinful man. Jesus' silence calms Peter and is the beginning of the water-to-land transformation.

We, as with Peter, find comfort in the familiar. The change in Peter is not that he will no longer be a “sinful man”, but by his leaving all to follow Jesus, he will more discover the deep truth of his being a man of the earth and yet not defined nor confined by this awareness. He will be positioned to be more available to his being loved. Peter will allow the relationship with Jesus to free himself for a more compassionate and generous relationship with himself.

Guilt, about being sinful, can be a comfortable excuse for us to avoid intimacy which Jesus offers. We can say to ourselves: “The more distant I stay away from Him, the less I will feel guilty and so freer.” That is a good one and I have experienced it myself, but it doesn't work so peacefully. Self-pride mingles with the sense of guilt — “I do not want to raise expectations and hopes for myself and then I can merely stay inside the waters of isolation won't reveal my truth of myself to myself nor anyone else.”

Peter was in a shallow spot near the shore. Jesus finds him there and invites him to go deeper. There's fear and yet fullness in doing so. But Jesus encounters Peter and thereby Peter encounters Peter

**NEW PERSONS:**

Regular readers of these commentaries will remember that I've mentioned Fr. Casper Deis before. He was my spiritual director in my first year of minor seminary. Though he was helpful on many levels, one of the main things I remember him telling us 13 and 14-year-old “kids” was that we shouldn't be afraid to tell him we wanted to leave the seminary — “I'll take any excuse you give,” he said, “except one. Don't anybody dare tell me he doesn't want to be a priest because he's unworthy. If that's your excuse, I'll personally throw you out of my office, fling you down the steps and pitch you out the front door. Nobody's worthy to be a priest.”

Actually, he could have gone further — none of us is worthy to carry out any ministry God gives us. The Scripture Readings for this 5<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time take that for granted.

In the midst of God's majestic call, something suddenly dawns on Isaiah — “I am doomed! I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, The Lord Almighty!” [Isaiah 6:1-8]. In other words: “I can't possibly do what God wants me to do. This must be a case of mistaken identity. God's going to be furious when he finds out the wrong guy intercepted this call.”

But to the future prophet's surprise, God had already planned for his unworthiness — a seraph appears, touches Isaiah's lips with a burning ember and takes care of things. The reluctant man has no other choice. When the Lord asks: “Who will go for us?” he can only respond: “Here I am, send me!” Obviously when God calls, God provides us with whatever we need to carry out that call.

Simon Peter discovers the same thing in Luke's Gospel. This professional fisherman makes the horrible mistake of challenging Jesus' command: “Lower your nets for a catch” [Luke 5:1-11]. He basically tells him, “You stick to preaching; I'll do the fishing.”

Amazed when the preacher demonstrates he's quite a fisherman, Simon “fell at the knees of Jesus and said: ‘Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.’” At that point, this itinerant preacher surprises him more than he did with the miraculous catch of fish — “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” In one of the low points of his life, Simon's called to be a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. No talents to speak of, no accomplishment to fall back on, he can only trust in the person who calls him.

Paul of Tarsus reflects on something similar when reminding the Corinthian community of his own call. He lists himself among those who originally experienced the risen Jesus. But unlike the others, the Apostle classifies himself as “one born abnormally” — literally, one who was born when no one even realized his mother was pregnant. No one could have seen this one coming. “After all,” he recalls, “I persecuted the church of God.”

In grade school I learned that baptism removes all sins committed before baptism. Only when I started studying Scripture did I begin to understand how that total removal actually takes place. It has nothing to do with washing sin away — Baptism makes us new persons, just as the resurrection made Jesus a new person. Newly baptized don't have to confess those prior sins because they didn't commit those sins. A different person did the sinning.

Following that reasoning, I presume those called by God and Jesus also become new persons when they accept those calls. At that point they're no longer restricted by the old person's limits.

No need for Fr. Deis to throw us out the door.

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

**WISDOM:**

When one has nothing more to lose, the heart is inaccessible to fear.

—St. Thodore Gurin

**ON BEING LOVED SINNERS:**

We're strange creatures, more lovely than we think, and more sinful than we imagine. Human nature is a curious mix. On the one hand, we're better than we think, and this beauty, and goodness doesn't just come because, deep down, we're made in the image and likeness of God or because, as Plato and Aristotle say, we're metaphysically good. That's true, but our loveliness is also not abstract. At least most of the time we're beautiful too in our human and moral qualities.

Most of the time, in fact, we are quite generous — often to a fault. As well, most of the time, too, despite appearances, we're warm and hospitable. The same is true in terms of the desire and scope of our embrace — both of our minds and our hearts. Inside of everyone, easily triggered by the slightest touch of love or affirmation, lies a big heart, a grand soul, a Magna Anima, that's just itching to show itself. Mostly the problem isn't with our goodness, but with our frustration in trying to live out that goodness in the world. Too often we look cold and self-centered when we're only hurt and wounded.

We don't always look good, but we are. Mostly we're frustrated precisely because we cannot — for reasons of circumstance, wound, and sensitivity — pour out our goodness as we would like, nor embrace the world and those around us with the warmth that's in us. We go through life looking for a warm place to show who we are and mostly don't find it. We're not so much bad as frustrated. We're more lovely than we dare imagine.

That's the half of it. There's another side — we're sinners too, more so than we think.

An old Protestant dictum about human nature, based upon St. Paul, puts it accurately — “It's not a question of are you a sinner? It's only a question of what is your sin?” We're all sinners, and, just as we possess a big heart and a grand soul, we also possess a petty one. Inside us too, congenitally, there's selfishness, jealousy, and a pettiness of heart and mind that is never far from the surface.

Moreover, generally, we are blind to our real faults. As Jesus says, we too easily see the speck on our neighbor's eye and miss the plank in our own [see Luke 6:41]. There's a real contradiction here. Where we think we're sinners is usually not the place where others struggle with us the most, and where our real faults lie. Conversely, it's in those areas where we think we're virtuous and righteous that, most often, our real sin lies and where others struggle with us.

For example, we have always put a lot of emphasis on the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment, sexual ethics, and haven't been nearly as self-scrutinizing in regards to the fifth commandment that deals with bitterness, judgments, anger, and hatred, or with the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> commandments that have to do with jealousy. It's not that sexual ethics are unimportant, but our failures there are easier to see and harder to rationalize. The same isn't true for bitterness, anger, especially righteous anger, nor for jealousy. We can more easily rationalize these and not notice that jealousy is the only sin that God felt it necessary to prohibit in two commandments. We're worse than we imagine and mostly blind to our real faults.

So where does that leave us? In better and worse shape than we think! Recognizing that we're more lovely than we imagine and at the same time more sinful than we suppose can be helpful — both for our self-understanding and for how we understand God's love and grace in our lives.

Aristotle used to say that “two contraries cannot exist within the same subject.” He's right metaphysically, but two contraries do exist inside of us morally. We're both good and bad, generous and selfish, big-hearted and petty, gracious and bitter, forgiving and resentful, hospitable and cold, full of grace and full of sin — all at the same time. Moreover, we're dangerously blind to both — too unaware of our loveliness as well as our nastiness.

To recognize this is both humbling and freeing. In essence, we're, “loved sinners.” Both goodness and sin constitute our real identity. Not to recognize the truth of either leaves us either unhealthily depressed or dangerously inflated, too hard on ourselves or too easy on ourselves.

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



more deeply, who then encounters Jesus, who then invites Peter to begin the process of his being transformed from the water to his attracting others, us, to walk with Jesus in His mission of transforming the earth — “Be not afraid of Him nor yourself.”

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

**HOW IS GOD CALLING YOU?**

You have all noticed, I'm sure, that the theme that links our Scripture Readings for this 5th Week in Ordinary Time, is all about the idea of call or vocation. It's perhaps not just a coincidence, but a happy example of God's providence that February is a month when we pray for vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. Well, while we will hopefully pay attend to this, we must also look more closely at Scripture to see what they say to all of us right now.

What is most striking to me is that there is a common progression repeated in each of the calls — an awareness of the presence of God, then the call itself, followed by a response, and action. Isaiah is praying in the temple when he is suddenly aware of God's presence in a way not experienced before [Isaiah 6:1-8]. Paul speaks of his call — which we are all familiar with — in which he saw the presence of God in the bright light [1 Corinthians 15:1-11]. Peter, too, hears the voice of Jesus, but only after the miraculous catch of fish does he realize that he is in the presence of the holy [Luke 5:1-11].

The immediate response of all three is astonishment and fear — perhaps not unlike our own when we realize that the Lord is calling us. “Woe is me,” says Isaiah; “Who are you, Lord?” [see Acts 9], says Paul; and Peter responds: “Depart from me.” Each one hears reassurance in a different way from God — from Jesus, but it all comes down to the same thing — don't be afraid. How often do we hear those words in the Gospels — especially the Gospel of Luke. Don't be afraid to accept the challenge that you hear from God because this same God who calls you will be with you no matter what.

And then action. “Here I am, send me,” says Isaiah, and he goes out and preaches the words that God has put into his mouth, words that will get him into trouble. But once he has responded, once he has been touched by God, he cannot not speak, no matter what the consequences. Saul gets up from the ground and begins the process of conversion that will change him from a persecutor of Christians to the Apostle to the Gentiles. Peter and Andrew, James and John leave everything, Luke tells us, and follow Jesus.

Awareness of God's presence and the idea of finding God in all things is the foundation of spirituality. Spirituality leads us to listen for God's call — we are called every day, many, many times. Since that is true, that means that the call can come at unexpected moments, while we are doing the ordinary things that make up the web and woof of our lives. Isaiah was praying in the temple; Paul was on a journey to Damascus; and Peter was washing his nets when Jesus got into his boat. God calls wherever people are to be found, and if that means during the plowing or bathing the sick or gathering roses, then that is where the call of God will be heard. The Incarnation means that God took on human flesh and blood, human existence, human experience. And that implies that God uses ordinary people, places and things to reveal the extraordinariness of God. When we realize this we too will be able to cry out with Isaiah: “It is the Lord.”

We might be tempted to say: “Oh, but Isaiah and Paul and Peter had such extraordinary experiences. It was easy for them to recognize God's presence.” But when we read our Scripture, we metaphors for the experience of God's powerful and overwhelming presence in the lives of these people, and that experience is possible for each and every one of us at any moment of our lives. Be careful — it may happen when we are all singing, “Holy, holy, holy,” at Mass, but it could just as easily happen when we off having a meal or family gathering.

And then there is the final step — action. What we read in Scripture is how these three people became aware of God's overwhelming presence, of the Lord's insistent call, and how they responded and moved into action. What about us? We are confronted by the massive challenges of life today, and a culture that is often in opposition to the Gospel. It's only after we have all become aware of the overwhelming presence and love of God, have listened closely and heard the Lord ask: “Whom shall I send?” that we can stand with Isaiah, with Paul and with Peter and say: “Here I am. Send me.”

—taken from the writings of Father Leo Murphy, S.J., which appear on the internet.

## IS THIS STORY ABOUT YOU?

*The New Yorker* magazine ran a wonderful cartoon of a psychiatrist and his patient. The caption has the psychiatrist saying to his female patient: “Madam, please do not get angry. I’m only trying to save you money. You should feel guilty.” The late Archbishop Fulton Sheen said that instead of becoming penitents, many of us become patients. The Lake of Galilee possesses a picture postcard beauty. If you were to rent a helicopter to do a fly-over, you would see a pear-shaped body of water about thirteen miles long and eight miles wide. It enjoys almost a tropical climate. Today, Jewish teens spend many hours water-skiing on the water’s surface. In the time of Jesus, there were ten prosperous towns situated around the lake. Almost all of those people made their living from the waters in front of them. Thus, one gets an idea of how rich the lake was in fish. This point makes it difficult to understand how the professional fisherman Peter and his companions had come up empty the night before. All they had caught were bad colds, a pair of old sneakers, some empty bottles, and crabs dead from advanced old age.

In Luke’s Gospel [5:1-11] Jesus finds Peter and his crew cleaning their nets on the shore; it is morning, and the night has been long. At the same time, Jesus was well into His long workday. He was preaching to huge crowds on the beach. Because of Cana and several other miracles — and because of his profound speaking ability — Jesus had become a reluctant celebrity. The village synagogues were no longer large enough to hold the people anxious to hear Him, so He preached on the beaches. The Teacher was not bound to old methods — he was willing to try new ways of reaching people. It is like the old saying: “if the mountain won’t come to Jesus, He would go to the mountain.” The mob was so eager to hear Jesus; they were pushing Him into the lake for an unwanted swim.

When was the last time you fought for “ringside seats” to hear Jesus?

Quickly the Nazarene jumped into the high bow of Peter’s large boat drawn up on the sand — the bow became His pulpit. Once His instruction was finished, He ordered Peter to cast off. Before the miracle catch, Peter addressed the Christ as Master — he was just an interesting rabbi, but nothing more. But then the nets were dragged into the boat overflowing with fish.

At that point, Luke stresses Peter was no longer on his feet but on his knees. And this time he called Jesus Lord. It was not that Peter was an incisive theologian. Rather, like all his fellow Jews, he believed that anyone who possessed control over the waters also possessed divinity — such a man had to be the Messiah. Notice too what Peter says — “I am a sinful man.” *The Wall Street Journal* carried an article that posed the question: “When was the last time you had a good conversation about sin?” Most of us would have to reply that we no longer have such discussions. We have become sinless. If so, one should not wonder why the world is in the state it is.

Here’s some things to think about. In the home Christianity is kindness; in business it’s honesty; in society it’s courtesy; in work it’s fairness; to the unfortunate it’s sympathy; to the weak it’s help; to the evil it’s resistance. When you hear someone talking about sin, do you shrug and conclude he or she is speaking about someone else? If your answer is “yes”, then reflect on *The New Yorker* cartoon. Perhaps you should feel guilty. Are you Fulton Sheen’s penitent or patient? When was the last time you received the Sacrament of Reconciliation? —taken from the writings of Father James Gilhooly, which appear on the internet.

## A PRAYER:

Jesus, replace my anxious thoughts with your truth, soothe my restless heart with your peace, and help me find comfort in your presence.



is a bit of a braggart. He lacks courage. But God still calls him and gives him the ability to be the greatest and first of the apostles.

“I can’t do this.” “I can’t do this anymore.” I have heard a young girl say this as she is dealing with the stress of her first baby who suffers from cholic. I have heard an elderly man say this as he is dealing with the challenges of chemotherapy. I have heard a young widow say this when two years after the tragedy of her husband’s death she still questions her life. I have heard a husband say this as he realizes that he is not giving himself fully to his marriage. I have heard a priest say this as he realizes that he is not giving himself fully to the priesthood. To all these people, I must say: “You are right. You can’t do this anymore — at least not alone.”

It is time for us to stop thinking that we can do it ourselves and start trusting in God who will help us complete the mission in life he has given us. That young Mom, and all our young parents need to know that you didn’t just happen to become a mother or father. God has given you this child and he will give you the help you need to be a good parent. That elderly gentleman taking chemo and all those in our parish suffering from serious ailments — no matter how old they are — you need to know that you are not alone in your suffering and your anguish. Trust in God, put up the fight for your own life the best you can, and know that as long as you are with God, it really doesn’t matter whether you beat this particular crisis, or the next or the one after that, as long as you fight with the Lord.

The young widow and all those suffering horrible losses — particularly those who have lost children — need to know that God will get them through the sorrow and that they now have a gift of understanding they can share with others in pain. That man or woman, mother or father, in perpetual grief over the loss need to know that they are better for having loved, and now can be even more loving, having lost.

The husband or wife who say they cannot go on because he or she is not fully committed to their marriage need to ask themselves why they are holding back. They need to ask themselves if they want God in the relationship. Sometimes, the person they want is neither God nor their spouse. Then no wonder why they feel they can’t go on. They can’t. But if God is admitted and a Christian lifestyle is resumed, they can do this — they can be a husband or wife. God gives us the power to walk away from that which is destroying us.

I once had a long talk with a priest who was living a double life. He said: “I can’t keep doing this — preaching the faith, and living Christianity while at the same time I want to be with another person.” I, a product of the 70’s, was shocked at how traditional my answer was: “You are right, you can’t do this being a public hypocrite. But God called you to be a priest. He can and will give you the grace and power to return to the life he has given you, and to leave a situation which is destroying your priesthood and destroying you.”

Fill in the blanks. Are there situations in your life when you feel you just can’t go on, you just can’t do it. Do you feel deserted by God? You are not. He’s never closer to you than when you need him the most. Remember, the miracle of his love is that there are billions of people in the world and each one is loved by God as an only child. He loves you and he loves me as though we are the only one he ever created. We can go on; we can do it with God’s help. And his help is there.

The angel took an ember from the fire and purified Isaiah’s lips [Isaiah 6:1-8]. That had to hurt. Perhaps it does hurt to let God take control of our lives, but it is a good hurt. All that we do for the sake of our Divine Lover and his Kingdom is worth the effort and sacrifice. The gift of ourselves is little in comparison to the gift of Jesus on the cross. But it is still a valid and worthy gift as we complete our role in the battle of and for the Kingdom of God.

I can’t do it. Yes I can. “I can do all things in him who strengthens me” [Philippians 4:13].

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





acknowledge the great contrast between our hopes and our behavior. Then, like Peter, we can humbly appreciate the fact that we are invited into a love that will transform us into all that we can be — as long as we are willing to abandon whatever prevents us from walking humbly with our God. As we move toward that, we will be able to say with Paul: “I am what I am by the grace of God that is with me.” What a contrast!  
—taken from the writings of Sister Mary McGlone, C.S.J., which appear on the internet

### “I AM A SINNER”:

Because of our relationship with Jesus, we Christians have a view of love that is different from our culture. We see love as not just a feeling or an emotion which can come and go. We understand love as a decision — and ultimately as a charisma, a grace, a gift from God.

Our Scripture Readings for this 5th Week in Ordinary Time show why we need that gift of grace. Isaiah says: “Woe is me, I am doomed! I am a man of unclean lips, living with a people of unclean lips” [Isaiah 6:1-8]. You and I belong to a fallen race. For sure, we humans can boast of amazing accomplishments. Yet when you look at our history, it’s not a pretty picture. Our world is filled with violence, and let’s be honest, in your heart and mine — “I am a man of unclean lips, living with a people of unclean lips.”

We have a theological word for this matter of belonging to a fallen race — original sin. Isaiah was not the only one recognizing the pervasiveness of sin. Peter says to Jesus: “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man” [Luke 5:1-11]. And because of his sinful, misguided past, St. Paul sees himself as the “least of the apostles — unfit to be called an apostle” [1 Corinthians 15:1-11].

Some people imagine that the recognition of sin is depressing and negative. Not so. St. Paul says: “where sin abounds, grace abounds even more” [Romans 5:20]. God can take the worst sinner and make him or her the greatest saint. He did it with Paul; he did it with Peter. Jesus says to Peter: “Do not be afraid. From now on you will be a fisher of my people.” And for Isaiah, God takes a burning coal from the altar and touches his lips: “Your wickedness is removed, you sin purged.”

One of the most beautiful statements that Pope Francis made, he said when he became pope. Someone asked him: “who are you?” His response was simple: “I am a sinner.” When we recognize that reality, we have nowhere to go but up. If Pope Francis can identify himself as a sinner, what’s stopping you and me? Once we say that, we have nowhere to go but up. Maybe you won’t be pope, but I hope you will be a saint.  
—taken from the writings of Father Phil Bloom., which appear on the internet.

### A PURE HEART:

To be pure, to remain pure, can only come at a price, the price of knowing God and of loving him enough to do his will. He will always give us the strength we need to keep purity as something beautiful for God. Purity is the fruit of prayer. If families pray together they will remain in unity and purity, and love each other as God loves each one of them. A pure heart is the carrier of God’s love, and where there is love, there is unity, joy, and peace.  
—Mother Teresa

### ALONE, I CAN’T DO THIS, BUT I AM NOT ALONE:

On this 5<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time, we are presented with Isaiah, Paul and Peter. All three are chosen by God. Each regrets that he is too human, and too sinful to fulfill God’s choice. But God makes up for what they lack. Isaiah says: “How can I, a man of unclean lips living among people of unclean lips, proclaim the Lord” [Isaiah 6:1-8]; Paul adds that he was called even though he had persecuted the Church — he is the very least of the apostles, but by the grace of God, still an apostle [1 Corinthians 15:1-11]; Peter is quite aware of his humanity — he is a fisherman without out any education. He is stubborn. He



### LOWERING THE NETS:

“Does anyone really read those articles you write?” I have a vivid memory of someone asking me this in the early years of my career as a freelance writer. I can’t remember who it was, or what precipitated the question. All I remember is that it stung — for a very brief moment, until I laughed.

I laughed because it was a comically rude thing to say, and I very much enjoy moments of unexpected comical rudeness. I laughed because of the absurdity of the situation — me, freshly graduated and completely broke, trying my hardest, giving my all, putting myself out there, only to have my ego toppled by the proverbial flick of a finger. But mostly, I laughed because I hadn’t realized, until this moment, something beautiful — I don’t care! It was a complete rush. I felt like I could exhale for the first time in months. I don’t care.

I don’t mean to be disingenuous — make no mistake, I earn a living by writing, and I do care about being able to feed my kids. And I will always feel joyful satisfaction with the completion of a job that I feel I’ve done to the best of my ability. But the existential fretting over the idea of my own “success” is what I have learned to live without. No, I don’t care if anyone reads what I write. In fact, I don’t care if you read the rest of this reflection. I’m writing it either way.

So why do anything? Why put any words on paper if I don’t really care who reads them?

Because I’m not the one who fills the boat — I’m just the one who lowers the nets. Luke’s Gospel gets me thinking about the elements that truly determine the success of an endeavor. Have you done a thing successfully because you have finished it? Because it has made you money? Because people are talking about it? Does real success demand one or all of these criteria be fulfilled?

Mozart never finished his *Requiem*, and Chaucer left a few of *The Canterbury Tales* unpenned. You can raise children well without making any money from it — in fact, the successful parents I know are a good deal poorer because of their kids. So, is it notoriety that spells success? Hardly! A CIA mission probably isn’t going to get any tongues wagging unless it all goes wrong.

“Master, we have worked hard all night and caught nothing” [Luke 5:1-11]. Peter felt he had failed. You can hear it in his voice.

But consider this — Luke’s Gospel simply doesn’t work without his wasted hours. If he had not spent a whole night pulling empty nets onto his boat, doubting himself, growing ever more tired and ever more discouraged, the whole impact of the next day’s catch would have been lost. Praise God for Peter’s unsuccessful night. Praise God for his empty nets. Praise God that he had enough trust in something other than his own ability to try one more time.

I have done all this writing only to say this: I can’t tell you how success is defined. I can only tell you that I think the question doesn’t need to be asked. Not by us, at least, and not now. That’s a question for the last day, when all of our actions and undertakings, and the morass of intentions which teem beneath them, will be laid bare by the only One who knows everything.

“Did you succeed?” God will ask me. It is my prayer that I will be able to answer honestly: “I don’t know. But I did as You asked.”

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

### CHILDREN’S BULLETINS:

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



## TALKING OR FISHING?

It might be good for us today to reflect upon worthiness. Are we worthy to have a relationship with God? We believe that God has made us and saved us. We believe that God has given us the status of sons and daughters, and is calling us to eternal life. Are we worthy of that status or of that future?

The simple answer is no. There is no way that we can deserve a relationship with God. In light of God's action and God's love for us, none of us are worthy. So that's the easy part — to understand that we do not deserve God's love or God's call. The difficult part is this — what are we to do with this insight? What are the consequences of recognizing our unworthiness? In Luke's Gospel, Peter has an answer. Peter concludes that, because of his unworthiness, Jesus should walk away from him. Peter sees Jesus' power in the miraculous catch of fish, and he is overcome by his own sinfulness and inadequacy. So he says to Jesus: "Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man" [Luke 5:1-11]. Peter concludes that he cannot be a follower of Jesus because he is unworthy.

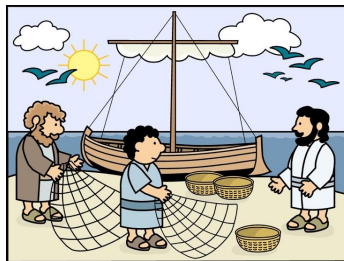
Now the remarkable thing about Luke's Gospel is that Jesus does not even stop to engage Peter in a discussion about his unworthiness; He immediately sends him out to preach the good news. Peter says: "Depart from me, Lord, because I am a sinful man." Jesus says: "Do not be afraid. From now on you be catching people." Jesus said, "Yes, you're unworthy, but I call you to be an apostle."

The situation is not unlike the young man who took a job as a park ranger. And he was given the assignment of supervising one of the big lakes in the national park, where many people came to fish. His job was to ensure that the regulations of the park service were maintained, and he took his job very seriously. He watched the people as they came from day to day to fish. But he couldn't help but notice that there was one man who brought back at least ten times as many fish as anyone else. And this made him curious and suspicious. So he said to this man: "I noticed the great number of fish that you are catching. Could I come with you one day, because I'd like to see your technique." The man said: "No problem. How about tomorrow?" So the next morning, the two went out in a boat together. The man drove the boat over into a small cove. Then as the ranger watched, the man reached into his tackle box and pulled out a stick of dynamite. He lit the fuse and watched until it was ready to explode. Then he hurled it into the water. There was a thunderous sound, and the water rose from the bottom of the lake. Soon there were dozens of fish lying on the surface. The man began reaching out and pulling them into the boat.

The ranger couldn't believe it. "What are you doing?" he said. "It's not legal to fish this way. You've broken almost every rule of the park ranger service. If everybody fished this way, there'd be no fish left in the lake. When we get back, I'm going to give you a citation and haul you in for a hearing. I assure you, they're going to take away your license, and you'll never be able to come to the park again. This is just unacceptable." As the ranger rattled on, the man reached again into his tackle box and pulled out another stick of dynamite. He lit the fuse, and just as it was about to explode, he handed it to the ranger. Then he said: "Okay. Are you going to talk or are you going to fish?"

In a way, this is what Jesus and Peter's conversation is like. Jesus says to Peter: "I know you want to discuss your own unworthiness, but I'm not interested. I want you to go out and preach the good news." The remarkable thing in Jesus' answer to Peter is that the solution to our own unworthiness is not to walk away but to walk forward, proclaiming the gospel to others. Surely, we are unworthy, but God still needs apostles, those who are sent out to proclaim God's love.

This insight is an important one, because you and I could take any good thing in our life and become paralyzed by our own unworthiness. Do we deserve the faithful love of a spouse? Do we deserve a new relationship after a painful divorce? Do we deserve to be a parent, entrusted with a new life to shape and mold? Are we worthy of a life-long friendship or a rewarding job? Are we worthy to live in this free



## CONTRASTS:

Luke throws us into the middle of contrasts in his Gospel. Having been roundly rejected at home in the hills of Nazareth, Jesus went down to Capernaum — about 20 miles away and with an "elevation" of about 560 feet below sea level. There, as the crowds thronged around him, Jesus must have been at least a little disconcerted that the people with whom he grew up had tried to throw him off a cliff, while he was celebrated among folks who had only recently met him.

Although Luke skips the details, we know that this was not Jesus' first appearance in Capernaum. His Nazarene relatives and neighbors knew what he'd done there and wanted him to do at least as much among them as he had in the fishing village [see Luke 4:21-30].

But now the circumstances were all different. Instead of being in the limited space of a synagogue, Jesus was outdoors near a lake with a jostling crowd gathered to listen to him. In a move that was at least as symbolic as practical, Jesus decided to embark on Simon's boat and teach from there.

What did Jesus preach or teach? Luke only tells us that it was "the word of God" [Luke 5:1-11]. Although that may sound ordinary enough to us who regularly hear similar phrases in our liturgy, no other evangelist uses that expression to describe Jesus' teaching. For Luke, "word of God" described the originality of Jesus' teaching — it was the seed planted among the people who were uniquely blessed when they received it.

The seaside setting where Jesus began teaching the word of God was independent of traditional prayer spaces — outside the confines of a predefined or exclusive community, larger than his cultural/professional circle as a hill-country son of a carpenter. Perhaps that made it easier to invite fishermen to abandon the water for a life of walking from town to city and through the countryside. That invitation is the centerpiece of the Scripture Readings for this 5<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time.

Continuing the contrasts, Jesus, the carpenter who worked with solid, earthy materials, finished his preaching by telling the boatmen to put out for a catch. Trusting Jesus' person more than his expertise, Simon did so and came up with bursting nets that remind us of a resurrection story [see John 21]. Seeing that, Peter fell to his knees. What Jesus said and did was too much for him to deal with.

Peter's protest was one of the most self-aware things he ever said in the Gospels — and only Luke records it. Peter's awe at Jesus and his recognition of his own inadequacies gave Jesus the opening necessary to invite Peter to more.

Unlike the wealthy young man [see Luke 18] who approached Jesus to let him know how well he had kept all of the commandments, Peter acknowledged that he had lots of room for improvement. That attitude prepared him for Jesus' invitation to transformation, to lure people with the Gospel, and not just sell them the catch of the day.

In Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth, he tells his people to remember the power of the Gospel that he preached [1 Corinthians 15:1-11]. To explain that, he could well have cited what Isaiah the prophet reflected on as he was completely overwhelmed by the holiness and greatness of God [Isaiah 6:1-8]. Like Peter, Isaiah says: "Woe is me! I am a person of unclean lips!" And like Peter, Isaiah's admission was enough to put him on the way to wholeness.

These Gospel contrasts offer a prism through which to contemplate our Christian vocation. Luke tells us that Jesus preached the word of God — a radical, revolutionary, renovating message that communicates the seeds of unimaginable transformation.

Peter and Isaiah remind us that on our own, we are incapable of comprehending, much less spreading what we are offered. Yet, that very realization provides the opening for the grace of listening and obeying the invitation to receive and become more than we would ever hope for.

Luke's Gospel reminds of what Isaiah says: The Lord of hosts calls us, not because we are like the glorious seraphim, but because we recognize our inadequacies. Let us pray for the blessing to



**THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS:**

In Luke’s Gospel [5:1-11], an experienced, but frustrated fisherman, reluctantly takes the advice of a carpenter from Nazareth and has an amazing catch that fills his boat and the boat of his partners as well. When the fisherman — Simon Peter — saw this, he fell at the feet of Jesus — the carpenter turned itinerate preacher — saying: “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” Jesus tells Simon not to be afraid — “from now on you will be catching people.” When Simon and his business partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, got their boats ashore, they left their livelihood and their families and followed Jesus.

Jesus attracted many other disciples by the power of his personality, his teaching, and his wondrous deeds. Some — like Peter — left everything to follow him. But many others — Mary, Martha and Lazarus for example — stayed at home and kept their jobs, putting the example and teaching of Jesus into practice in their daily lives. Throughout history, there has been a tendency to exalt the disciples who renounce ordinary life in the world, while relegating the stay at home disciples to a secondary status. In effect, this meant restricting the word “vocation” — and the call to holiness to priests and nuns. The Second Vatican Council [1962-1965] reversed this trend by teaching that all the baptized have a vocation, all are responsible for building up the Body of Christ and spreading the reign of God in the world, and all are called to holiness. There are no second class members of the Church.

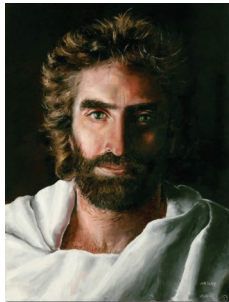
Many Catholics have grown spiritually and became more effective disciples by appropriating the Vatican II teaching on the common vocation to holiness. Abraham, a cradle Catholic, who for a good part of his adult life was content to let the pastor run the parish, took some classes on Vatican II and is now very active in his parish, serving on the finance council and the liturgy committee. Sarah, a dedicated stay at home mother of three, who sometimes felt inadequate because she did not have a paying job outside the home, became far more comfortable with her chosen role when she thought of it as a true vocation which is her path to holiness. Isaac, a talented marketing grad student, who worried that pursuing a career in the business world was selling out the consumerist culture, heard a homily on the spirituality of work that convinced him that he could, in good conscience, take a job with a marketing firm, and use it as a way of living his faith and contributing to the common good. Rebecca, a single mother, who felt sort of useless after her two children left home and started their own families, came to see that she had a second vocation as a grandmother who could still do a lot of good.

What does the universal call to holiness mean to you and how can you respond more wholeheartedly?  
 —taken from the writings of Father Jim Bacik which appear on the internet

**THE FULLNESS OF JOY:**

Christians must always nourish in their hearts the fullness of joy. Try to do that, sisters and brothers. I have tried it many times, and in the most bitter situations, when slander and persecution are at their worst, I have united myself intimately with Christ as my friend, and I have tasted a sweetness that all the joys of earth cannot give. It is the joy of God’s intimacy, the profoundest joy the heart can experience, even when people don’t understand you. Christ pronounced these words of joy on the tragic last night of his life, knowing that the next day even his disciples would abandon him. No doubt there was fullness of joy in the depths of Christ’s soul even when he was ascending Calvary in the bitter agony of his passion, because he was doing the will of his Father and he felt that God was not abandoning him despite all appearances of abandonment — “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete”.

— Oscar Romero



country? We are not — these are all gifts. We could easily point to all of our mistakes and sins, to all of our shortcomings and failures. But the point of Luke’s Gospel is that, despite our unworthiness, Christ still sends us out, so that others might know God’s love through our witness and through our service.

So yes, in so many ways we are lacking and unworthy. But the issue is not our deficiencies, but God’s mission and God’s kingdom. And so Jesus says to each one of us: “Do you want to focus on your unworthiness or will you go forth and proclaim God’s love to others? Do you want to talk or do you want to fish?”  
 —taken from the writings of Father George Smiga, which appear on the internet

**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.

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

- Monday:** 1 Kings 8:1-13, Mark 6:53-56
- Tuesday:** 1 Kings 8:22-30, Mark 7:1-13
- Wednesday:** 1 Kings 10:1-10, Mark 7:14-23
- Thursday:** 1 Kings 11:4-13, Mark 7:24-30
- Friday:** 1 Kings 11:29-12:19, Mark 7:31-37
- Saturday:** 1 Kings 12:26-13:34, Mark 8:1-10

**6<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time:** Jeremiah 17:5-8, 1 Corinthians 15:12-20, Luke 6:17-26

**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-----[Saturday, January 29]-----[Weekly Mail-in] ----- \$ 30.00**  
**Offerings-----[Sunday, January 30]----- \$ 662.00**

**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

**BLACK AND CATHOLIC:**

Alright, let's cut to the chase — I'm Black, I'm Catholic, and I'm a child of immigrant parents. To be honest, these three facts don't make me popular. For a huge chunk of my childhood, being Black wasn't an issue — or at least it wasn't one I was aware of. From kindergarten to eighth grade, pretty much every kid I went to school with looked like me — or at least was some shade of brown. When I got to high school, the skin tones were a bit more varied, but most of the kids still looked like me.

And then everything changed. March 29, 2002 was not only my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, but moving day, as well. My parents, without first consulting me — how rude of them! — decided we were going to move out of the city and into the Boston suburbs. I hated it. My friends, school, youth group, and church community were all in the city. I put up a good fight, but because I needed somewhere to live, I lost — although I was allowed to continue going to school in Boston.

This small, suburban town was a lot different than my Boston neighborhood. I remember being in my suburban home, thinking I could just walk to the corner store to get a Little Debbie snack or a Hostess cupcake or something. So, I began to walk and walk and walk. After about 20 minutes, I thought there must be a store nearby, so I took a right and walked another ten minutes. I had finally stumbled upon a neighborhood convenience store. I walked in, and I kid you not, the whole store turned and stared at me. I was followed as I walked up and down the aisles. I suddenly felt like I didn't belong. I felt different — like an outcast. I was the minority and I definitely felt it.

I thought to myself: “maybe it's this side of town, or maybe just the people who happen to be in the store.” As I explored different places during my first week in my new town, I continued to have that same experience from the corner store. For the first time, I felt the weight of my skin color. For the first time, things I heard and read about, or saw on TV and in movies, became a reality. As my first week came to an end and my second week began, I was certain there was one place where I would not feel like an outcast — Church.

To help you understand my Sunday worship experience in my new town, I'm going to quote a song by Catholic musician Ike Ndolo, called: *Your Table*, on his album, *Shine*.

We walked into Mass at our new parish. The hospitality was OK, but boy did we stick out like a sore thumb. At the end of the Mass, we were rushed by all sorts of people who were welcoming us and introducing themselves. A question we were repeatedly asked was: “Did you guys just move here?” “Yes, we just moved here from Boston.” “Oh, but where are you from?” “We lived in a neighborhood in Boston called Hyde Park.” “No, but were you born here? I hear an accent.” “We immigrated from Haiti years ago” — my parents had been in America for 30 years at that point.

And it happened again. Just like in the convenience store, I felt like I didn't belong. But this time, I was in a church. The person greeting us went on to say: “Oh, Haiti, that's nice. We have a lot of people from Portugal in this parish. We're very diverse.”

It's hard being Black and Catholic. As I read more and learned about the persecution from Catholics in the Caribbean — especially in countries like Haiti — I began to question: “What am I doing? Why am I Catholic?” A lot of my black friends from Boston started to ask me the same question. By my junior year of high school, most of my old friends had already converted to other Christian denominations and were trying to convince me to do the same.

Their biggest argument was that the Catholic Church is a “white church” — and I was beginning to believe them. No one in the church — except for my family — looked like me. Everyone — the priest, youth minister, music minister, lectors — was white, and I felt that there was no one there who I could relate to.

People in the Church have made mistakes — some of which we continue to feel and are still paying

repercussions for. And, at least in my world and line of work for the Church, I am still considered the minority. It doesn't always feel good — in fact, it's pretty uncomfortable at times. But the reality is that I'm, first and foremost, a child of God, and everything comes after that.

Jesus came so we might all be one. This is what I'm working toward, and this is one of the reasons why I'm Black and Catholic. I'm also Catholic because of the Eucharist, and because of the 2,000 plus years of apostolic succession lived out by our Church. And though the Church in North America seems to be predominantly white, there are millions of Catholics around the world who are different races and ethnicities, and who speak a variety of languages. Every one of them belongs.

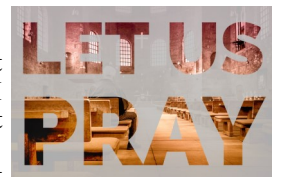
Now, this doesn't mean that my experience that day at my new church was OK. Rather, it means that we need to work harder to reach out to those who, on the surface, appear different than us. I later found out that a considerable number of black people lived in my new town, but they, too, felt that there was no one like them in the Catholic Church. As a result, they left the Church and began attending other Christian churches.

People of color leave the Church on the very notion that it is the “white church”, and, for that reason, they don't belong. Something needs to change, and it starts with you and me. Branch out; become comfortable with being uncomfortable; look beyond your clique of friends; study other cultures; strive for true diversity; and unite yourself under the banner of Christ, the banner of humanity.

—written by Paul Albert, a LifeTeen missionary

**LIFE TEEN and EDGE:**

**Our Life Teen and EDGE youth group is meeting in-person again.** We will meet for an hour beginning at 11:30 AM following our 10 AM Sunday Mass in the Lennon Board Room. If you are unable to join us, there are many resources available for you on the Life Teen website — [lifeteen.com](http://lifeteen.com). There are numerous blogs and videos for you to connect with. The Life Teen national office continues to release many new programs. **Please contact Father John for more information. And please join us each Sunday for our Mass at 10 AM — in person or live-streamed, and then come to our Life Teen/EDGE gathering after Mass.** And above all, let us continue to join each other in prayer. **Father John is available for you. Please contact him [cell: 216-570-9276].**

**WHY PRAY?**

Why should I spend an hour in prayer when I do nothing during that time but think about people I am angry with, or people who are angry with me, books I should read, and books I should write, and thousands of other silly things that happen to grab my mind for a moment?

The answer is: because God is greater than my mind and my heart, and what is really happening in the house of prayer is not measurable in terms of human success and failure.

What I must do first of all is to be faithful. If I believe that the first commandment is to love God with my whole heart, mind, and soul, then I should at least be able to spend one hour a day with nobody else but God. The question as to whether it is helpful, useful, practical, or fruitful is completely irrelevant, since the only reason to love is love itself. Everything else is secondary.

The remarkable thing, however, is that sitting in the presence of God for one hour each morning — day after day, week after week, month after month — in total confusion and with myriad distractions radically changes my life. God, who loves me so much that he sent his only son not to condemn me but to save me, does not leave me waiting in the dark too long. I might think that each hour is useless, but after thirty or sixty or ninety such useless hours, I gradually realize that I was not as alone as I thought; a very small, gentle voice has been speaking to me far beyond my noisy place. So be confident and trust in the Lord.

—Henri Nouwen