

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

**~ Prayer of a Yearning Heart ~**

How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O LORD of hosts!  
My soul longs, indeed it faints  
for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh  
sing for joy to the living God.  
Even the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may lay her young,  
at your altars, O LORD of hosts,  
my King and my God.  
Happy are those  
who live in your house,  
ever singing your praise.  
Happy are those whose strength is in you,  
in whose heart are the highways to Heaven.

O LORD God of hosts,  
hear my prayer;  
give ear to me, O God.  
O God,  
look on the face of your anointed.  
For a day in your courts  
is better than a thousand elsewhere.  
I would rather be a doorkeeper  
in the house of my God  
than live in the tents of wickedness.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
he bestows favor and honor.  
No good thing does the Lord withhold  
from those who walk uprightly.  
O Lord of hosts,  
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

—Psalm 84

**CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:**

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.  
phone: [440] 473-3560 [office] 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.*

**FAITH EDUCATION:**

Faith Education returns to being “in person” this year. With that in mind, it is very important that you register your child early so that we will know how many teachers we will be needing. Even if your child attended class in the past, because we are resurrecting our program, you will need to register. Our Faith Education classes for the year will begin on **Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup> at 8:45 AM**. Please join us as we come together to begin our faith journey for this year by entering into prayer and worship together. **If you have any questions, please contact Patty in the Chapel Office** [[440-473-3560]. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.

**PLANTING SEEDS OF HOPE AND GOODNESS CONTINUES:**

Once again this year, we are going to undertake our **Planting Seeds of Hope and Goodness school supply program**. Our Lady Chapel is working to assist the needy children of **St. Adalbert's Parish School**. Come join us as we work together to help these children get the next school year off to a good start come this Fall. Please follow this list when you are shopping. Only the following items are needed at this time — **No. 2 Wooden Pencils, Glue or Glue Sticks, Kleenex, Paper Towels and there is a special need for Backpacks**. Any and all quantities of these supplies are welcome!



Here is how you can be a part of this outreach. Simply shop for items on the list. Kindly **return the items between now and August 7<sup>th</sup>** to Our Lady Chapel. **If you do not have time to shop, simply place an envelope in the collection basket and mark it “St. Adalbert's” or drop it off in the chapel office.** “Come Grow with us” — as together, we work and plant our seeds of hope and goodness to this community. Thank you in advance for your generosity and helping the children of St. Adalberts! Contact Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560] if you have any questions.

**BLESSING OF COLLEGE STUDENTS — AUGUST 6-7:**

As so many of our college-aged young men and women are beginning to prepare to depart for the up-coming orientations and new school year, we will do a blessing over all college [undergrad as well as graduate] students at our Masses on the weekend of August 6-7. As a faith community, we want your school year to be filled with the joy and excitement of life, as well as the presence of God. Join us for this special blessing.

**BLESSING OF OUR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS — AUGUST 27-28:**

Our school year begins on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Giving everyone a few days to “settle in”, we would like to gather our Students and Teachers as they begin the journey of 2022-2023, by sharing a blessing of God upon them. As a faith community, we want your school year to be filled with the joy and excitement of life, as well as the presence of God. **Join us at our Masses this weekend of August 27-28 for this special blessing of our students and teachers.**

**PRAYING FOR OTHERS:**

When we say to people: “I will pray for you,” we make a very important commitment. The sad thing is that this remark often remains nothing but a well-meant expression of concern. But when we learn to descend with our mind into our heart, then all those who have become part of our lives are led into the healing presence of God and touched by him in the center of our being. We are speaking here about a mystery for which words are inadequate. It is the mystery that the heart — which is the center of our being — is transformed by God into his own heart — a heart large enough to embrace the entire universe. Through prayer we can carry in our heart all human pain and sorrow, all conflicts and agonies, all torture and war, all hunger, loneliness, and misery, not because of some great psychological or emotional capacity, but because God's heart has become one with ours.

—Henri Nouwen

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For Robert Bonner, uncle of AVI associate Director, Bobbie Bonner, who is recovering from Brain Surgery.
- For Sharon Wilson, wife of Brother Ken's nephew, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Bob Hovel who is critically ill, resulting from a brain tumor.
- For Raymond Buganski, father-in-law of Athletic Director, Sean O'Toole, grandfather of Owen ['18], Connor ['20], Kelsey ['24], and former Gilmour Student, Erin O'Toole, who is under to care of hospice.
- For Bill Anton, father of Alexis Anton ['13] who is recovering from major heart surgery

**FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Brian Skubovius [anniversary]
- For Marjorie Ritchie, mother of Amy Ritchie ['87]
- For Father William O'Neill, pastor-emeritus of St. Clare.
- For Richard Felber, father of Andrew Felber ['74]
- For Robert Fay, father-in-law of Matthew Roddy ['86], grandfather of Matthew ['18] and Joseph ['21] Roddy.
- For William Zhun ['70], brother of Peter ['66], Paul ['69], and Bob Zhun ['71]
- For Rosetta Graham, sister of Brother Roy Smith, C.S.C.
- For Sister Jeanne Nieminen, S.N.D.
- For Tom Rakovec, father of Housekeeping person, Matt Rakovec.
- For Sister Ruth Evelyn Mauch, C.S.C.
- For Elvera Gruttadauria, mother of Frank Gruttadauria ['76], and grandmother of Jenna Gruttadauria ['03]
- For Gene Delauder.
- For Father Robert Glepko, pastor emeritus of Nativity of BVM [Lorain]

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

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

**FACTS OF LIFE:**

No one need starve. There is enough land and enough food. No one need die of thirst. There is enough water. No one need live without mercy. There is no end to grace. And we are all instruments of grace. The more we give it, the more we share it, the more we use it, the more God makes. There is no scarcity of love. There is plenty. And always more.

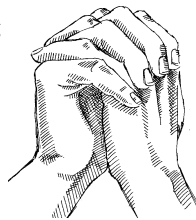
—Rachel and Rosemarie Freeney Harding

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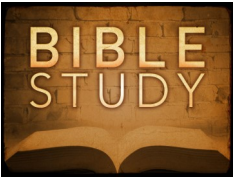
**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For Peter Mulligan [\*80], brother of Laurie Mulligan White [\*75], who is recovering from a stroke.
- For Luca Palazzo, who is critically ill with cancer.
- For Pat Malak who is critically ill.
- For Nick DeLorme, who is undergoing treatment for a rare form of cancer.
- For Lauren Murphy, mother of Tara Seibel, who was injured in a fall
- For Dale Rusnik, uncle of Jakob Bennish [\*30], who is undergoing treatment for many medical issues.
- For Ann Griggs, mother of Father Gabe Griggs, C.S.C., who is under the care of hospice.
- For Liz Rybka, who is undergoing treatment for Gastric Cancer.
- For Tricia Ashkettle, who is undergoing treatment for brain cancer.
- For Matthew Gebhart, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Thomas Hughes [\*56], who is undergoing treatment for memory issues.
- For John Roddy, brother of Tim Roddy [\*87], son of Kathleen Roddy, former teacher's aide in the Montessori, and brother of Mary Roddy-Stretar, Marketing Associate at Gilmour, and cousin of Daniel [\*83], Mike [\*85], and Matt [\*86] Roddy, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For James Law, husband of LS resource associate, Elana Law, who is undergoing treatment for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- For Sam Barrick, who has been diagnosed with cancer.
- For David Matis, husband of former Middle School Director, Paula Mattis, father of Kim [\*89] and Bill [\*91] Mattis, who is under the care of hospice.
- For Fletcher Linsz, brother of incoming student, Logan Linsz [\*26], who is undergoing treatment for Hodgkin Lymphoma.
- For Frank Nannicola, grandfather of Cassie [\*17], Frank [\*18], and Mia [\*19] Nannicola, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Michael Nestor [\*98], who is undergoing treatment for a rare form of cancer.
- For Vicki Giancola, mother of Vince Giancola [\*23], who continues treatment for cancer.
- For Elaine Hocevar, mother of Greg [\*97], Matthew [\*98], Ryan [\*00], and Sarah [\*01] Hocevar, who is awaiting a heart transplant
- 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 Mary Goers who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.
- For Bernice Girgash, aunt of Basketball Coach and Counselor, Dan DeCrane, who is undergoing treatment for cancer..
- For Karuna Singla, Sister-in-law of Science teacher, Neena Goel, aunt of Nikhil [\*13] and Nupur [\*17] Goel, who is undergoing treatment for bone cancer.
- For Melita Chiacchiarini, 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.
- For Paul Tuggey, grandfather of Charlie Tuggey [\*21], seriously ill following a heart attack.



**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, August 3<sup>rd</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: Living an attitude of gratitude in meeting the person of Jesus**

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, July 24: 17 <sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, July 25: St. James	NO MASS
Tuesday, July 26: Sts. Joachim and Anne	NO MASS
Wednesday, July 27:	NO MASS
Thursday, July 28:	NO MASS
Friday, July 29: Sts. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus	NO MASS
Saturday, July 30: 18 <sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person
Sunday, July 31: 18 <sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

**COME TO THE FEST — AUGUST 7<sup>th</sup>:**

We are excited, and blessed, to announce that *The FEST* is back HOME for 2022 at the Center for Pastoral Leadership in Wickliffe. Join us on **Sunday, August 7, 2022** to enjoy the BEST national Christian artists — **Crowder, Phil Wickham, We the Kingdom, Micah Tyler, and Rhett Walker** — along with inspiring displays and vendors, and meaningful crafts and activities for the kids. There is plenty of **FREE parking near the seminary**, along with the opportunity to purchase a parking pass right on the FEST grounds. Find out all the details by going to: [www.theFEST.us](http://www.theFEST.us). Even if you can't make it during the day, **join Bishop Malesic at 8 PM for an inspiring outdoor Mass.** Join thousands and thousands as we come together as one at the Table of the Lord. The Mass will also be live-streamed at [www.theFEST.us/Mass](http://www.theFEST.us/Mass). It's the perfect one-tank trip



There have been times when I thought of Jesus' words with some resentment — "Okay Jesus, what do you really mean when you say: 'ask and you shall receive?'" Do you mean: ask the right question, seek the right thing, knock on the right door? Because it feels like I've been asking, seeking, and knocking persistently for a long time without receiving, finding, or having the door opened!"

Many of us know from experience that asking a direct, concrete question to God doesn't usually receive an answer in the way we hoped. College students will pose questions to God like: "Do you want me to be a doctor, a teacher, or a missionary? Are you calling me to married, single, or religious life?" Very rarely does God answer by checking A, B, or C when we present a choice like that. This "tell me what to do" approach — while it includes a beautiful willingness to listen to God — also assumes that it is God's responsibility to make my decisions for me. I implicitly resign from participation and responsibility in my own choices. It rather stunts any conversation to be had in prayer. But I also have to admit that these tendencies sneak in subtly and frequently!

Often I catch myself thinking that if God isn't answering my very clear question, then I must be asking the wrong question. Lurking in the background is the idea that I just need to figure out the question God wants to answer! This "figure it out" approach sees both God and myself as tricksters — God has a map of my life that I'm not allowed to see but I have to solve in order to succeed, while I attempt to trick God into answering my questions. Abraham appears to be doing this [Genesis 18:16, 20-32] — as if God didn't know what Abraham wanted to ask for in the first place, and want to give it to him! This approach also gets in the way of dialogue in prayer and discernment.

Scripture offers us some interesting images of God. One might say that God has an image problem — or better yet, we have an image problem with God!!! The problem is: how do we see this mysterious and unimaginable God? How we pray — which is a relationship — reflects our images of God and ourselves. How real is our image of God? If we hide before God like beaten slaves, then our prayer will reflect that sense of self. If we allow God to bless us so we might receive a sense of the holiness, then our image of God is entirely different, and we are more open to allow God to share with us. Does God listen to prayer? Is God moved by our prayers so that we receive all that we desire? The answer to those questions is very dependent upon our openings to receive forgiveness and humble ourselves before God.

Abraham is walking with his visitors — the same three who visited him in last week's reading — to show them the way to Sodom. The Lord God has heard the great outcry there is against Sodom and Gomorrah for their pattern of not living the just and upright way of the Lord. What we hear is Abraham's, not bargaining, but questioning just how far God will go in forgiving.

It's like a strange kind of Poker Game going on. The game opens with God looking over the table of the world and then hears the great outcry against these cities of sin and their inhabitants. Abraham, somehow sensing the mind of God, represents an ancient question: "Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty?" So, the bidding begins. Abraham lowers the pot and God keeps raising. Abraham pleads with God to save the many because of the righteous and just lives lived by the few. God increases the pot of mercy as the number of the just to be found in Sodom decreases. Abraham wins by being assured that there are at least ten just persons to be found. God wins by showing that forgiveness is God's trump card.

The basic question is whether God will destroy the individual person because of the sinful group. This is part of the image problem upon which Abraham focuses. God is the creator, and if creation does not respond gratefully and reverently, then God can destroy it all and start all over. That is one image — and a proper and good one. Abraham is trying, not to manipulate God, but to discover and obtain a proper picture of how this visiting God intends to make other visits — considering that not all other are as



## ARE YOU A HAGGLER?

Some years ago, I was commenting on the readings for this 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time. I was having a friendly disagreement with the editor of one of the diocesan papers carrying my articles. She strongly objected to my talking about Abraham "haggling" with God — believing that this term bordered on anti-Semitic language. She encouraged me to use a word like barter or negotiate instead. I immediately called a rabbi friend, asking his opinion on the matter. He assured me: "Roger, there's nothing wrong in speaking about a Jew haggling. We're not only known for it — we're proud of it." That's why the Genesis author includes this narrative in the Sodom and Gomorrah story [Genesis 18:16, 20-37]. If it's a characteristic for which Jews are proud, then Abraham, the ancestor of all Jews must have had it in spades.

Though no scholar takes this haggling between God and Abraham literally, the writer not only created this passage to demonstrate the latter's negotiating prowess, but also to show his unique relationship with God. As theologically simplistic as it might sound to us today, the Yahwistic author is telling us that God is someone you can bargain with — as long as you've given yourself over to God.

In some sense, Luke's Jesus is telling us something similar. It seems that God — like the besieged friend — has a breaking point. Find it, and you'll get what you want. Yet, listen carefully to what Jesus says you're going to get. It won't be a lot of "stuff." Rather, "the Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." In other words, if we ask for the Holy Spirit, we're certain to receive the Holy Spirit — no strings attached.

As we've seen in the past, Luke — more than any other evangelist — is convinced THAT the Holy Spirit is an essential element in our becoming other Christs. In his mind, how would we know how to carry on Jesus' ministry without that Spirit pointing us in the right direction? At this point in the second half of the first century CE, the Christian community, following the historical Jesus' mindset, had not yet locked itself into a hierarchical structure. It functioned as the Body of Christ because of its deep relationships with the risen Jesus and with one another — not because of any clerical prerogatives. As Paul once reminded his Corinthian community, the Spirit not only gifts each member of the community with all the talents that community needs, it also helps them integrate those gifts for the good of the community [see 1 Corinthians 12].

Paul further refines this as he writes to the Church at Colossae — the relationship we have with the risen Jesus who gives us his Spirit revolves around our determination to die and rise with him — "You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him" [Colossians 2:9-14]. I don't worry a lot about the rising — Jesus will take care of that. But I do spend a lot of time mulling over the dying — how am I to accomplish that today? That is where the Spirit kicks in.

Once upon a time, I — along with many other Catholics — thought the only way to die was to ignore the Spirit working in my life and simply give myself over to the will of those exercising authority over me. Things certainly got more complicated when I started studying Scripture. Like our sacred authors, I began to realize my relationships with God, the risen Jesus, and the Holy Spirit took precedence over my relationship with the institution. At that point, I also began to do a lot of haggling. Just wish I were as good at it as Abraham.

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

## YOU ARE GOOD:

The rest of your life is waiting for you. So, don't let your past rob you of your future. You are more than the worst thing that has ever happened to you. You are more than the worst thing you have ever done. God is never more than one choice away. It only takes one Holy Moment to shift the momentum of your life in the right direction.

—Matthew Kelley

the holiest friends? Do we pray to tell God how to do our bidding?

To me, those ideas seemed blasphemous. I couldn't believe in a God who demands cajoling or groveling. Neither could I love a God who controls the timing of the accident, the death of babies and the suffering of war. A God like that attracts no tenderness and doesn't seem to respect our freedom. Is that the God to whom Jesus invites us to pray?

After Jesus taught his disciples his style of prayer — what we call the Lord's Prayer — he told them a parable that can be misinterpreted in various ways [Luke 11:1-13]. Jesus told of a person — we'll call her Angie — who had no food and whose friend, Vlad, arrived hungry in the middle of the night. Angie's apathetic friend Sam always had extra bread, so she went knocking on his door, pestering him until he gave her bread just to get some peace.

Jesus praises Angie's persistence and tells his disciples: "Ask and you shall receive."

One conventional interpretation of Jesus' teaching is that if we ask God enough, we will get what we want. But, in addition to the offensive implication that we care more about the hungry than God does, there are two tricks planted in the story.

The first is that Jesus does not say: "Learn to beg cleverly enough to get what you want." He says: "Ask, and God will give you the Holy Spirit."

Trick No. 2 is a bit subtler. Vlad the Hungry went to impoverished Angie in need of bread. When Angie shook Sam out of his lethargy, she helped him as she did Vlad. When Sam shared his excess, he moved the world one step toward justice — he became part of creating a better world for everyone, and to the extent that he found joy in that, he would continue to do it.

Angie the evangelizer succeeded in finding sustenance for the hungry and enticing a friend toward Gospel values.

This explains the first trick. Angie's effort to get bread for hungry Vlad can be understood as a creative response to the Spirit's grace, and her effort to spread that grace. In this interpretation, God acts on our behalf through creative grace, inspiring advocates to awaken sleepers on behalf of the hungry.

Our prayer for the coming of God's kingdom is ultimately a prayer of self-offering. God does not promise to rain down bread from heaven, but to empower us to share and to encourage others to do the same. In this vision, we are not relating to a faraway God who must be cajoled into caring and acting; we are communicating with the God who is as near as we are to ourselves — the God whose grace empowers us with the strength and creativity to collaborate with the divine plan.

Luke's Gospel began with the disciples' request that Jesus teach them to pray. What was his theology of prayer?

First, we see that the Lord's Prayer can be summarized by any of its phrases, and most particularly by the one Luke saved for Jesus' prayer in the Garden: "Thy will be done" [see Matthew 26:42]. When we pray like this, we make ourselves totally available to God's grace working in and through us. When we understand prayer as a union of our will with God's, we are praying, as our eucharistic prayer says: "Through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in the union of the Holy Spirit."

When we pray with and in and through Christ, we come to know God's presence with and among us in everything. God may not keep us from all harm, but because God's love is expressed in the Spirit and through others, we will never face harm alone.

When we allow Christ to teach us to pray, we stop asking God to do our bidding and join Christ in doing everything we can for the coming of God's kingdom.

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



“Lord,  
teach us to  
pray...”

faithful and responsive as he — Abraham — is himself.

God allows parameters to begin shaping a divine image. If there is going to be a kingdom to come, then the King comes first to form the realm. This kingdom will not be ruled, but continuously formed by the personality of the King and the King's ways of creating and recreating.

And this is where Jesus' teaching us to pray is critical [Luke 11:1-13]. What is apparent in the Scripture Readings for this 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time, is that God speaks to us through our deepest desires. Naming our desires before God is an honest prayer. God wants us to ask, seek, and knock about those desires! Honesty like that is the foundation of good discernment — a collaboration with God, a participation in the abundant life God wants to give us. "Even when you were dead," writes Paul, "Christ brought you to life along with him" [Colossians 2:9-14]. God draws us close through our desires. Abraham "drew nearer" to God to pray centuries before Jesus taught his disciples. I think that's what Jesus is getting at in Luke's Gospel. He is teaching the disciples — and us — how to pray, which is not really about getting what we want or getting it "right," but about drawing closer in relationship to God who brings us to life.

Luke's version of the "Lord's Prayer" is shorter than Matthew's version; it is Matthew's version that we are more familiar with [see Matthew 6:9-13]. Jesus — when asked to teach his disciples to pray — does not give instructions about how to stand or prostrate. He does not even give lists of words or ideas. Jesus tells them to bless God's name according to the ancient Jewish forms. Then acknowledge that this most holy God is indeed bringing about holiness on the earth. In humble recognition admit then, that one needs holy-help to bring about that holiness within each individual every day.

Then Jesus, according to Luke, invites those who are relating to God through prayer to admit that they have not lived faithfully their responses to their being invited into the kingdom — thus, they need to be forgiven. They will know what forgiveness is because they forgive others as members of the kingdom. Then they will end by asking to be cared for by God when tempted to leave the kingdom for one another.

So, who is this God to whom Jesus teaches us to pray? A loving parent, a generous friend, a just king, and a compassionate teacher who is with us amid our struggles — Jesus himself? This God is not a trickster, a miser, or cruel. If we are skeptical that God could be that good to us, Jesus holds up a mirror to help us out. If we know how to be loving parents, generous friends, fair judges, and compassionate, encouraging teachers — and most of us have a pretty good idea of how to do those things, even if we don't always do them perfectly — how much more does God know how to love us? Then Jesus teaches us to ask for what draws us closer to God — for forgiveness, for what we need, for the coming of the Kingdom. If we seek the coming of the Kingdom, we can begin to see it and participate in it. If we knock on the door of abundant life, it opens. Indeed, we may find we were holding it closed to begin with, and it opens easily once we let go of the handle to knock.

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

## SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

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

## THE BOLDNESS OF PRAYER:

A prayer-master advised his listeners to adopt the APU program when they pray — "Be aggressive; be persistent; and be unreasonable." His disciples balked at such an approach to the Almighty. But the guru directed their attention to the Scriptures [Genesis 18:16,20-37]. There Abraham is in conversation

— or is it prayer? — with God. In this scene, Abraham is aggressive, persistent, and unreasonable. On the evidence, God should have destroyed the immoral and infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. They deserved whatever they got — and then some. But Abraham proves to be an able negotiator. By clever maneuvering over some time, He causes God to back down on His original plan. Perhaps even at surprise to Himself, the Lord allows Abraham to win the day — the cities are spared. Chalk a big victory up for Father Abraham. More importantly, do take a page out of his how-to-pray manual. If Abraham could get the gold ring in his prayer, why cannot you and I?

Abraham has convincingly shown us that God is a soft touch — and Jesus happily confirms that point in Luke's Gospel [11:1-13]. Actually, we have a big edge over Abraham — it doesn't get any better than being able to address God as "Father" — as uncomfortable as it makes us, that translates as you know into "Daddy". If we think the APU plan is off the wall, Abraham would think calling Jehovah "Daddy" completely ludicrous. Imagine what Abraham might have accomplished with his APU approach if he felt able to call his exalted Lord "Daddy!" Unfortunately for him, as he would be the first to tell us, he was born centuries too soon — Father Abraham addressed God most solemnly as "Lord" four times in the framework of a few seconds.

So, in our prayer we must employ not merely a strong second effort, but rather Abraham's third and even fourth effort. Abraham was obviously not designed to take "no" for an answer. Had God asked him what part of "no" he had difficulty in understanding, he would answer immediately "the whole word, Lord." If he could respond that way to God, then why not we? So, don't be afraid to nag — after all, as someone has noted, God does have millions of people calling Him.

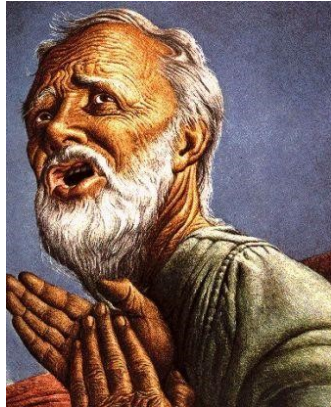
There are times when God must put you on hold. But, when He does come back to you and says: "Thank you for holding," the door stands wide open for you. At that point, Father Abraham would quickly advise you: "Go for the gold."

A few years ago, I was traveling through the majestic state of Arizona. I made a visit to an attractive chapel in a small town. I found the following in a pew — it ties in nicely with Luke's Gospel. "I cannot say 'our' if I live only for myself. I cannot say 'Father' if I do not approach God like a child. I cannot say 'who art in heaven' if I am not laying up some treasure there right now. I cannot say 'Hallowed be thy name' if I am careless with that name. I cannot say 'Thy kingdom come' if I am not working to actualize it in the here and now. I cannot say 'Thy will be done' if I am resentful of that will for me at this moment. I cannot say 'on earth as it is in heaven' if I don't look on heaven as my future home. I cannot say 'Give us our daily bread' if I am overanxious about tomorrow. I cannot say 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us' if I am waiting to settle a score with someone. I cannot say 'Lead us not into temptation' if I deliberately put myself in a place to be tempted. I cannot say 'Deliver us from evil' if I am not prepared to pray as though everything depends on God and work as though as everything depends on me."

A sage teaches that it is a smart person who flees temptation and does not leave a forwarding address. Dag Hammarskjöld wrote: "Hallowed be thy name, not mine. Thy Kingdom come, not mine. Thy will be done, not mine."

A final word! From Luke's Gospel, God does appear to enjoy brevity. The prayer He teaches us today has but 44 words. His Ten Commandments has a modest 297 words. The famous Twenty-third Psalm a mere 118 words. Should we not follow suit? Perhaps God is telling us that He is not appreciative of long-winded prayers. Furthermore, He is not hard of hearing.

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



do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Sadly, today, we are a culture that for the most part is tone-deaf ritually. We don't understand ritual, and therefore mostly don't know what to do when we need to be doing something, but we don't know what to do. That's a fault — a painful poverty — in our understanding.

The Trappist monks who were martyred in Algeria in 1996 were first visited by extremists who would later kidnap and kill them, on Christmas Eve, just as they were preparing to celebrate Christmas mass. After some initial threats, their eventual murderers left. The monks were badly shaken. They huddled together as a group for a time to digest what had just happened. Then, not knowing what else to do in the face of this threat and their fear, they sang the Christmas mass. In the words of their Abbott: "It's what we had to do. It's all we could do! It was the right thing." He shared too, as did a number of the other monks — in their diaries — that they found this, celebrating the ritual of mass in the face of their fear and panic, something that calmed their fear and brought some steadiness and regularity back into their lives.

There's a lesson to be learned here, one that can bring steadiness and calm into our lives at those times when we desperately need to do something but there's nothing to do. Ritual — it's what we have to do. It's all we can do! It's the right thing.

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

## SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — AUGUST 20<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.

## IS PRAYER ABOUT MANIPULATING?

Many years ago, a couple of teenagers I worked with were in a serious car accident. Soon after the accident, I heard a youth minister tell the young driver that if he prayed hard enough, his buddy would live. I was so angry with that minister that I could hardly speak. All I could think of was that if the other kid died, the driver would feel doubly guilty — first for the accident, and secondly for not praying well enough. Happily, the young man recovered.

I could not fathom the minister's theology. Did he think of God like a game show host who awards prizes to the best performers? Did he believe we need a special formula to talk God into being nice or to think twice when God is inclined to be mean? Did he think God does the most for the people who have

fear.

Finally Pope Francis emphasizes that the opposite of faith is not atheism, but idolatry: “Faith, tied as it is to conversion, is the opposite of idolatry; it breaks with idols to turn to the living God in a personal encounter.” Pope Francis call us to faith — to trust God, to forgive and to pray like Abraham. Abraham is the great model for this faith. Abraham boldly places his needs before God [see Genesis 18:16, 20-37]. St. Paul tells us that by faith we were not only buried with Jesus, but raised with him [see Colossians 2:9-14]. Jesus challenges us to trust God as deeply as Abraham: “Ask and you shall receive, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” [Luke 11:1-13].

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

## THE POWER OF PRAYER AND RITUAL:

In the movie based upon Jane Austen’s classic novel, *Sense and Sensibility*, there’s a very poignant scene where one of her young heroines, suffering from acute pneumonia, is lying in bed hovering between life and death. A young man, very much in love with her, is pacing back and forth, highly agitated, frustrated by his helplessness to do anything of use, and jumping out of his skin. Unable to contain his agitation any longer, he goes to the girl’s mother and asks what he might do to be helpful. She replies that there’s nothing he can do — the situation is beyond them.

Unable to live with that response her says to her: “Give me some task to do, or I shall go mad!” We’ve all had the feeling at times when in the face of a dire situation we need to do something, but there’s nothing we can do — no magic wand we can wave to make things better. But there is something we can do.

I recall an event in my own life several years ago. I was teaching summer school in Belgium when, late one evening, just as I was getting ready for bed, I received an email that two friends of mine — a man and a woman recently engaged, had been involved that day in a fatal car accident. He was killed instantly and she was in serious condition in hospital. I was living by myself in a university dorm, thousands of miles from where this all happened, and thousands of miles from anyone with whom I could share this sorrow. Alone, agitated, panicked, and desperately needing to do something — but being absolutely helpless to do anything — I was literally driven to my knees. Not being able to do anything else, I picked up the prayer-book that contains the *Office of the Church* and prayed, by myself, the Vespers prayer for the dead. When I’d finished, my sorrow hadn’t gone away, my friend was still dead, but my panic had subsided, as had my desperate need to do something (when there was nothing I could do).

My prayer that night gave me some sense that the young man who’d died that day was alright — safe somewhere in a place beyond us — and it also relieved me of the agitation and panicked pressure of needing to do something in the face of agitated helplessness. I’d done the only thing I could do, the thing that’s been done in the face of helplessness and death since the beginning of time — I’d given myself over to prayer and to the rituals of the community and the faith of the community.

It’s these, prayer and ritual, which we have at our disposal at those times when, like the man in *Sense and Sensibility*, we need to do something or we will go mad. That’s not only true for heavy, sorrowful times when loved ones are sick or dying or killed in accidents and we need to do something but there’s nothing we can do. We also need ritual to help us celebrate happy times properly. What should we do when our own children are getting married? Among other things, we should celebrate the ritual of marriage because no wedding planner in the world can do for us what the ritual of marriage — especially the church-ritual — can do. Weddings, just like funerals, are a prime example of where we need ritual to



## SAVING SODOM:

The Scripture Readings for this 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time begin with one of my favorite passages in all the scriptures — the story of Abraham interceding before God on behalf of Sodom, lest it be destroyed [Genesis 18:16, 20-32]. I do not know of any other scriptural passage that more succinctly defines our relationship to God and the importance of prayer. The narrative unfolds like a drama — perhaps even like an extended comedy routine with increasing tension.

Abraham has a strategy. If he can get God to agree to spare Sodom for a certain number of just people, he can push God to reduce the number. Abraham succeeds in persuading God to spare the city for fifty just people. But, knowing that it would be difficult to find fifty good people in Sodom, he keeps lowering the number. He moves from fifty to forty-five, then forty, then thirty, then twenty, then ten. Abraham’s boldness and his persistence are amazing. With each verse the tension rises. We think to ourselves: “Abraham, quit while you’re ahead!” We expect God at each request to say: “No! Enough! I’ve given too much already!” But none of that happens. Verse by verse, Abraham succeeds, so that God agrees that only a handful of just people are necessary to spare all of Sodom.

Now this passage points to the importance of prayer. Our whole prayer tradition is an inheritance from Judaism, and this passage is one of its most brilliant expressions. Abraham is not afraid to ask God for what he wants. He does not hold back or stand on ceremony. Far from being reserved or polite, he attacks the conversation with God with an aggressiveness that can only be compared to a customer bartering with a merchant in a Near-Eastern bazaar. His example shows us that we are not only called to pray, but called to pray with our whole heart and soul. We are called to pray as if our life and the life of others depended upon it. Therefore, the intensity and the self-interest with which Abraham prays poses to us a fundamental question.

To place that question most directly I would simply ask: “Do you pray?” I am not asking whether you say prayers — we all do that — but do you pray? Do you entrust to God some of the needs of your life with anything approaching the intensity and the sincerity of Abraham? I would be willing to bet that many of us very seldom pray in that way. I think most of us say: “I don’t want to bother God. Things are going along pretty well. I can handle things myself.” Even when there are needs in our life — serious needs — I think are inclined to trust that things will work out. But we do not turn to God with that intensity and actually ask: “God, help me.”

Now both the Jewish and Christian traditions speak against such reluctance. What we are asked to do is to pray regularly and with all our soul. What we are asked to do is to entrust our deepest needs to God and believe that God will value the prayer that we offer. We are asked to believe that God is both Creator and Savior, and that our life is really in God’s hands. We believe all of those things in our head, but it is only in prayer that they move from theory to reality.

What would we pray for? We are able to choose. One of the great advantages of prayer is that it allows us to identify what is most important to us. We can pray for our children. We can pray that our cancer goes into remission. We can pray for a peaceful death. We can pray for world peace or that our marriage could heal. We can choose any need in our life. But it is not enough to identify such needs. We must actually ask God to help us. It is in vocalizing our needs and desires that they become prayer.

Now prayer of course is not magic. If we could pray today for a BMW and get one tomorrow, everyone would pray all the time. Prayer is an act of faith. It is entrusting our life, our deepest needs to God and believing that God will honor our request. Prayer is essential. Without prayer you cannot be a real Jew or a real Christian. Without prayer, all the things we believe are really just words. They are never entrusted to God in a real relationship. Jesus knows this. This is why as a good Jew he teaches us: “Ask and you will receive” [Luke 11:1-13]. Notice he does not say you will receive what you ask for. But he does say you will receive. You will receive what God gives you, and what God gives you will be good.



Abraham then is our model. Identify some good thing, and trust God enough to ask for it. The outcome is in God's hands, but the request and the way to offer it is in yours. So, ask with all your strength. You might receive peace for your family, restored health, or the hope to go on. Don't hold back. You may save Sodom.

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

### READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

**Monday:** 2 Corinthians 4:7-15, Matthew 20:20-28

**Tuesday:** Jeremiah 14:17-22, Matthew 13:36-43

**Wednesday:** Jeremiah 15:10-21, Matthew 13:44-46

**Thursday:** Jeremiah 18:1-6, Matthew 13:47-53

**Friday:** Jeremiah 26:1-9, John 11:19-27

**Saturday:** Jeremiah 26:11-24, Matthew 14:1-12

**18<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time:** Ecclesiastes 1:2-2:23, Colossians 3:1-11, Luke 12:13-21

### STRIKING A BARGAIN:

St. Luke's Gospel contains Jesus' parable about the friend who begs for bread from his neighbor at midnight [Luke 11:1-13]. Is this parable really about persistence — which is how it has most traditionally been interpreted. In other words, keep pestering God and eventually God will get tired of the nagging and give you what you want — like the person in the parable. But there might be more to it than this.

To think fresh thoughts about this story, it helps to know four bits of background information. First, in the ancient Near East, it was taken for granted that one offered a meal to a visiting traveler — even to a stranger. We saw this when Abraham offered a meal to the three visitors [Genesis 18:1-10]. Second, bread was essential to any meal in that culture; grain in the form of bread was a major part of the diet, and it also served as a utensil; pieces were used to dip into the common serving bowls. Third, since baking was done out of doors in an oven shared by several families, it was a kind of community experience, and everyone knew who had baked bread on a given day. Fourth, the reputation of a village for hospitality was a matter of community honor, so that if the man who came begging bread at midnight could not offer any to his guest, the whole town's reputation might suffer.

Now remember: Jesus' parables always have an element of surprise to the people who hear them — something that makes them sit up and take notice. It's hard for us to realize this from our perspective and from our familiarity with these stories. So, what is the element of surprise here? It's when the man inside says: "Leave me alone. The door is shut now and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up to look after your needs". The reaction from Jesus' hearers would be outrage — "That's ridiculous," they would say; "No one would refuse the duties of hospitality that way, and incidentally risk the reputation of the whole town. It just wasn't done.

And then there is the question about the persistence of the man who is begging — or could it be the persistence of the person in bed not wanting to get up? The fact is that in the Greek text, the word that is used for "persistence" could refer either to the man begging for bread or to the one already in bed with his family. Translators have usually made it refer to the one begging, and so the moral of the story has

a materialistic and a militaristic empire that kept others in place through trade and religion — as well as force. When these Gentiles who had become Christians prayed: "Thy Kingdom come," they were praying that the world order be changed. They were praying for the defeat of all that Rome stood for. They were praying for a very different world which would value sacrificial love rather than the accumulation of material goods. We still need to pray for that world. We need to pray that we might take steps away from materialism and into love.

In the Gospel of Luke and in The Acts of the Apostles [also written by Luke], bread is always associated with prayer as a reference to the Eucharist. The prayer for "daily bread", therefore, is not merely a prayer for physical sustenance — it is a prayer for the Eucharist. We who receive the Eucharist every week can easily forget the tremendous gift we receive in our hands or on our tongues. This is Jesus, really present right here right now, nourishing us, sustaining us. We should not take this gift for granted.

And we ask for forgiveness as we have forgiven others. The Christian norm for forgiving is the compassion and forgiveness of the Father. Luke's Gospel is called "The Gospel of God's Compassion." In this Gospel Jesus instructs us to be compassionate as the Heavenly Father is compassionate. In this Gospel the Forgiving Father welcomes home the Prodigal Son. In this Gospel an Older Brother is told he must learn to overcome his resistance to forgive, or this resistance itself will keep him from enjoying the Heavenly Father's banquet. We have to stop destroying ourselves with our grudges and forgive, move on, and enjoy the Christian banquet.

Finally the Lord's Prayer asks the Lord to "not subject us to the trial." The Gospel of Luke often focuses in on the end of the world — with keeping the ways of the Lord in focus in our lives. The fact is that many people throughout the world have answers to the problems of life that ignore the Lord. We continually experience this. The girl is pregnant, and some say: "Have an abortion." A marriage hits a rough point and some say: "Get a divorce." A teenager becomes difficult and some say: "Get out of the house." A grandparent is terminally ill and some say: "Let them kill themselves and save the inheritance for us." These and other so called solutions of our world are part of the test — the trial — that the Lord gives us to see if we really want to be standing for him when the end comes, whether it be the end of the world or the end of our own personal worlds.

The Lord's Prayer in the Gospel of Luke is the prayer of the Gentile disciple of Jesus — you and I — who recognizes that true power is not to be found in an empire and that true happiness is not to be found in possessions. The Lord's Prayer in Luke is ultimately a prayer to the Holy Spirit to empower us to live in the holiness of God's name — to receive worthily the Eucharist, to forgive those who hurt us, and to choose God before any other solution to the problems of life.

—taken from the writings for Msgr. Joseph Pellegrino, which appear on the internet

### FAITH AND THE POSSIBILITY OF FORGIVENESS:

Pope Francis call us to faith: to trust God, to forgive and to pray like Abraham. This week, the world will gather in Krakow for World Youth Day with Pope Francis. In his encyclical, *Light of Faith*, Pope Francis writes: "Faith likewise offers the possibility of forgiveness, which so often demands time and effort, patience and commitment. Forgiveness is possible once we discover that goodness is always prior to and more powerful than evil, and that the word with which God affirms our life is deeper than our every denial." From a purely anthropological standpoint, unity is superior to conflict. Rather than avoiding conflict, we need to confront it in an effort to resolve and move beyond it — to make it a link in a chain, as part of a progress towards unity.

At another time, Pope Francis quoted the great Anglican poet, T.S. Eliot, when speaking about a world without faith: "Do you need to be told that even those modest attainments // As you can boast in the way of polite society // Will hardly survive // the Faith to which they owe their significance?" If we remove faith in God from our cities, mutual trust would be weakened. We would then be united only by





**RELEARNING THE “LORD’S PRAYER”:**

Luke’s Gospel for this 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time presents the Lord’s Prayer. But there’s something wrong — it’s not the “Our Father” that we learned as children and that we pray during Mass [see Matthew 6:9-13]. It doesn’t sound quite right — “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test” [Luke 11:1-13].

So, why the difference? First of all, the Holy Spirit — the ultimate author of Sacred Scripture — used the evangelists — the writers of the Gospels — to present the teachings of Jesus to the various groups of people and to incorporate into these presentations an inspired understanding of the Lord’s words. Matthew was addressed to Christians of Jewish origin. Luke was addressed to Christians of Gentile origin. Matthew emphasized that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Scripture — Scripture was Jewish. The audience of Luke’s Gospel were people who knew little to nothing of Jewish scripture. Many of these people were poor, and the outcasts of society. They may not have had a foundation in Jewish Scripture, but they did have a deep understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. They believed that the Holy Spirit called them to faith and sustained them just as he called the people of all different nations to faith on Pentecost.

The Lord’s Prayer in Luke is given during what is known as “the journey narrative” — it is the prayer for the journey. In its immediate context, the disciples ask for a unique prayer — one which would express their unique following of Christ. John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray for the coming of the Kingdom. Did Jesus have a prayer for them? They also had experienced Jesus at prayer. What must that have been like? They wanted to pray like he prayed. They wanted to have union with the Father — not just recite words.

After the Lord’s Prayer is presented, Luke records two parables of Jesus which demonstrate the goodness of God. The first is humorous — it is meant to be humorous. A father wakes up in the middle of the night to hear a friend calling to him from outside asking him to borrow some bread. “What, are you crazy?” he calls back. “It’s the middle of the night. My kids are sleeping. You wake up the baby, you put her back to sleep. My wife’s sleeping, and I’ve got my PJ’s on. Go away.” “Well,” Jesus says, “if the friend keeps demanding the bread, the father of the house will give it to him just to keep him quiet. If that is how a mundane father would react to a petition, how much more would Your Heavenly Father who really loves you listen to your prayers. So ask, seek, knock. God is listening.”

The second parable is similar. If earthly fathers know how to provide good things for their children, how much more will our Heavenly Father know what to provide for the children whom he loves. Then we have a phrase unique to Luke: Ask the Heavenly Father, and he will give you the Holy Spirit. The Lord’s Prayer in Luke is a petition for all our needs — the greatest of which is the Holy Spirit.

Now let’s focus in on this Lord’s Prayer in Luke. It begins by saying that God’s name is hallowed. “Hallow” means “holy”. When we say “Hallowed be thy name”, we are saying: “May all people realized the holiness of your name.” God’s name was revealed to Moses from the burning bush. He said: “I am who am” — the sacred name, “Yahweh”. The Gentiles that Luke wrote to may not have known about Moses, but they knew that a person’s name was a unique expression of the whole of the person. To know a person’s name is to acknowledge who that person is. May all people — especially us — live in the knowledge of whom the Father is. May we recognize God’s uniqueness — his holiness. May his named be “hallowed.”

The Lord’s Prayer next asks that the “Father’s kingdom may come.” Rome had done its best to subject the entire world to its empire. It allowed the various people that it conquered to keep a local government and continue local traditions; it even allowed them to continue worshiping their gods as long as they also worshiped the Roman gods — particularly the emperors. The glory that was Rome was really

always been to pray persistently with perseverance, never give up, and God will eventually hear your prayer and in some way answer it.

Now I suspect that there may be a few of you that have in fact prayed persistently and nonetheless feel that God has not heard you or answered your prayers. So, what if the word refers to the person in bed? If that were the case, then the translation would go something like this: “Yet because of his avoidance of shame, or in order to avoid shame, he will get up and give him whatever he needs.” The fact is that it is precisely this interpretation that best fits with what Jesus implies in the questions that follow the parable. Even if the guy next door is a grouch, you know that he will come through with the bread to avoid dishonoring his own and the village’s reputation for hospitality. With this interpretation, the point of the parable is not persistence, but assurance. The man comes begging for bread in the middle of the night because he knows, for sure, that his neighbor will help him. And that’s the way Jesus says we should pray — with assurance and certainty that God hears us and in God’s own way we will be answered.

I’m reminded of the story of the little boy who prayed to God that he would receive a bicycle for his birthday. When the great day came around there was no bike, and so a “wise” adult said to the little boy: “I guess God didn’t hear your prayer.” The child replied: “Oh yes, God heard me. But he said no.” Out of the mouths of babes!

Now in the light of what I have said about hospitality in Near Eastern culture, I feel I must say something about that first reading — and not so much about that homely little dialogue between Abraham and God in which Abraham, fully assured that God will listen, does not hesitate to bargain to save as many people as possible in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. What I want to point out, however, is the misuse of this passage to bash gay people and to demonize unjustly a whole segment of our society. Even the Catholic Church is not innocent in this regard.

The scripture scholars are telling us today that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was not specifically homosexual activity — although illicit sexual activity — both homosexual and heterosexual — was apparently involved in the life of these two cities. The sin was the violation of the duties of hospitality. In the ancient Near East, again, hospitality was one of the most important virtues. It was given much more attention than anything that had to do with sex and sexuality. Sexual sins — both homosexual and heterosexual — are condemned quite strongly in other parts of the Old Testament. But they are never as serious as sins against hospitality. So, when you hear certain “religious” people trying to use this text to condemn gay people and consign them to outer darkness — well, take it with several large grains of salt. I try not to judge these people. Let’s hope they are sincere. But the fact is they are mistaken.

There is something very human about the Scripture Readings for this 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time. God is certainly not presented with an aura of otherness or aloofness. God’s exchange with Abraham is lively and very down to earth — even humorous. This dimension of our faith should not be overlooked. The transcendence of God is important for faith, for liturgy, and for forming Christian conscience. But there is also a charm about inspired human speech about God. That too is part of the message. Jesus’ homespun Palestinian parables really don’t lend themselves to being sanitized. We don’t serve religion well in identifying it solely with spotless sanctuaries and shining marble, with beautiful floral arrangements and flowing vestments — as important as these may be. A crying baby, a hearty laugh, a good round of applause — even in church — are an integral part of the mix of faith.

Faith is not just about a world beyond. It is about living in the here and now. And we do that as people — as men and women, as citizens of a nation, as part of a city or region. God did not hesitate to plunge into the human scene. And in so doing, God accepted limits. In becoming flesh, God laughed, cried, told interesting stories, and mixed with both men and women quite freely. In today’s scriptures, God lets Abraham strike a good bargain. Jesus tells us that his Father can be moved, not so much by persistence, but by confident, assured prayer — fascinating insights into God, but also very real dimensions of faith.

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



## HOW TO SEE PAST THE GLAMOUR OF SIN:

I graduated from high school a couple of weeks ago, so I can officially say that the way Hollywood depicts high school is, unfortunately, not even close to the real experience. Troy Bolton and Napoleon Dynamite didn't teach me about high school — through their awesome dancing was “who, and what I stood for”.

As the years progressed, I saw more and more of the people I looked up to because of their good grades and great behavior slip into habits like cheating on tests, sending their friends a picture of the completed homework to copy, and looking online for the answers to a test instead of actually studying. It wasn't just academics though — seeing my fellow peers throw parties with alcohol and drugs, skip school, and be rude to teachers was a common occurrence towards the end of my high school experience.

With this, I felt excluded — which I was not expecting to feel at all. I knew that I was being smart and safe, but I felt like there was something out there that I was missing. I mean, it seemed like almost everyone I knew was out there doing something that I was not — so there had to be something good about it, right?

Before you go thinking that I never hung out with anybody ever during high school, let me explain exactly what I mean when I say “exclusion”. I was — and still am — very blessed with a great group of friends during high school. Whenever I was with them, I had a great time. Instead of skipping school or going to the after prom party, my friends and I would support each other by going to our various performances, or by going to a local fast food place. I had a blast during high school, but I still felt like I was missing out on what everybody else was doing — even if I knew it was something bad.

The feeling of missing out on something doesn't even have to be a huge party after prom that everyone seems to be going to. It can be something as small as standing by and watching a fight without stopping it, or going to that website that has questionable content, or sending that one text that has gossip — the list goes on. While we read these things and think “Of course those are bad! Anybody knows that”, we should reexamine those situations, but in a different perspective. Satan himself was the most beautiful angel before God cast him to hell. The devil knows how to turn something we would normally reject into something so tempting that we might fall for it.

Sure you should try and stop the fight, but can you imagine what would happen if the fight kept going? Besides, nobody likes a goody two-shoes. Of course you shouldn't view a questionable website, but you've had a long day, your relationship just ended, you're a good person; what's one visit going to do? Everybody does it. It's obvious that you shouldn't spread a rumor, but if you did, you would be so popular! This story would be so big, the whole school would know who you are if you just let that small secret slip.

When we are given an example of something we know is bad out of our own lives, it's easy to act high and mighty, and say that we would never fall for it; yet when Satan wraps our predicament in a nice little bow and dares us to open it, the situation becomes harder to step. Sin can disguise itself as whatever it can, but it can be the most dangerous when it puts on the mask that it's something so beautiful, so precious, and so well loved that you feel ostracized if you don't take part in it.

When we were growing up, we learned about the bible through children's stories; we were taught that God is good and that sin is evil — sin is the equivalent of fool's gold. While our teachers were incredibly correct in all of this, what you learn over time is that sin can put on a disguise that can trick you into falling for it. For me, Satan attacked me through that feeling that I was missing out on something. When you become aware of sin and can say “no” to it successfully, Satan becomes more creative and more specific with how he attacks you.

This all came to light in a special way when one Easter I was renewing my Baptismal Promises at



Mass. I finally really heard what the promises said — I heard the priest say: “Do you reject the glamour of sin?” I had a mini-revelation.

Whenever we look back on our sin, we think “How could I possibly do this?” We have these thoughts because we forget how powerful that glamour can be. Satan can take his sin — even if we fight against it — and dress it up the way he knows it'll tempt us the most. We must learn how to see past its disguise.

So, here's the big question: “how do we fight sin when it has an advantage in the fight?” There is no definite, best way to do this since everybody struggles with different sins and fights those sins in unique ways. But here are some thoughts about what we can do:

- Take a step back from situation, and picture it as though you are an outsider looking in. If they wanted the best for you, what would they want you to pick?
- Ask someone you trust if what you want to do makes sense to them? Also, ask them if it would actually be good for you to make this decision?
- Have a commitment buddy! Get someone that you go to church with — or someone you know who has struggled with the same thing you are — and promise each other that you're going to keep each other away from possibly making bad decisions.
- Pray to St. Michael The Archangel — or any other saint for that matter — to help you fight what you're feeling. It always helps to have a whole army behind your back.

It's our duty as Christians to stand for our beliefs — even when it's hard. We have to say “no” to what we know is bad when everything else is telling us that “it's okay”. Recognizing sin, even when it's disguised as something we think we want, is a crucial step in order to defeat it.

—taken from the writings of Dillon Duke, a recent High School graduate.

## 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].**

## CHAPEL ENVELOPES:

There are many ways that you can support our Holy Cross Mission and support Our Lady Chapel. You can place your offering at the door of the chapel as you enter; you can use our on-line donation link; or you can mail in your offerings to the Chapel itself — whatever best serves your needs. If you need a supply of envelopes, please pick them up off the table in the Narthex of the Chapel when you come to Mass. Or you can call the office or stop in to request them. **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.** Thanks for not forgetting about us.

**Offerings-----[Saturday, July 16]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-in]----- \$ 110.99**

**Offerings-----[Sunday, July 17]----- \$ 275.00**

## WISDOM:

To the world you may be one person; but to one person you may be the world.

—Dr. Suess