

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ Regina Caeli ~

**Queen of Heaven,
rejoice, alleluia.
For the One
whom you did merit to bear, alleluia.
Has risen,
as he said, alleluia.
Pray for us to God, alleluia.
Rejoice and be glad,
O Virgin Mary, alleluia.
For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia.**

**O God,
who gave joy to the world
through the resurrection
of Jesus Your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
grant we beseech You,
that through the intercession
of the Virgin Mary,
His Mother,
we may obtain t
he joys of everlasting life.
We ask this
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

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.

THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY:

Monday, August 15th is the **Feast of the Assumption** of Mary into heaven. It is not observed as a Holy Day this year because it falls on a Monday. **But all are encouraged to attend Mass on that Day.** When the course of her earthly life was completed, the Blessed Virgin Mary was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of his Body. [Catechism of the Catholic Church, #974]. Mass on **Monday** will be at **5:30 PM**. The following prayer is taken from the Byzantine Liturgy:



In giving birth, you kept your virginity; in your Assumption, you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of Life. You conceived the living God and, by your prayers, will deliver our souls from death. Amen.

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 11th 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.

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

Our school year begins on August 22nd. 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.**

**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — AUGUST 20th:**

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



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

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

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Michael Bares, brother of James [*80] Bares and Religion Instructor, Eileen Pryatel, uncle of Michael [*08, Meghan [*13], and Kevin [*15] Pryatel, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Susan Plavcan, sister-in-law of Linda McGraw, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For William Rogan, father of Music Minister, Jill Rogal, who is undergoing treatment for kidney issues.

FOR THE DECEASED:

- 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.
- For Father James Vesely, pastor emeritus of St. Thomas More.
- For Richard Geier
- For Maury Petrak.
- For Rudolph Kastelic, father of Dianne Shafer [*85], Catherine [*92] Kastelic, and Elizabeth Burgei [*94].
- For Therese Hummer, grandmother of Therese Hummer [*04]
- For Nicole Ferrara Hazen [*95], sister of Rick Ferrara [*97]
- For Jeanne Wagner Krupp.
- For William Teknipp, grandfather of Ryan Teknipp [*09]; grandfather-in-law of Kaitlin Gill Teknipp [*09]
- For Brother James Bagans, C.S.C.
- For Brother Thomas Frey, C.S.C.
- For Thomas Hughes [*56], brother of Michael M. Hughes [*55], uncle of Mike [*82] and Kevin [*88] Hughes
- For Robert McQuistin, father of former Gilmour Teacher, Emily McQuistin.

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.

NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:

Blessed Basile Moreau was the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, to which Fr. John and the Brothers at Gilmour belong. We have two booklets with Novenas to Blessed Basile Moreau. One is used for a personal intention or healing; the other is used when praying for the intention or healing of someone other than yourself. The Novenas were composed by Father Thomas Looney, C.S.C. Many have received blessings and healings through the intercession of Blessed Basile Moreau, and now we want to extend this invitation to you and your family. Please see Father John and he will be glad to give you the booklets.

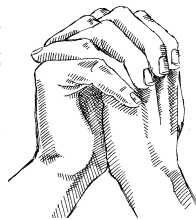


PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

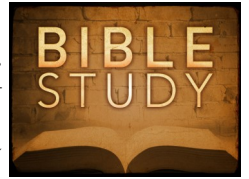
PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- 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 Bill Anton, father of Alexis Anton [’13] who is recovering from major heart surgery
- For David Francisco, who is recovering from triple bypass surgery.
- For Tom King, who is recovering from a stroke.
- For Marty Szakaly, brother of Father Tony Szakaly, C.S.C., who is seriously ill.
- For Gary Buck, who is recovering from prostate surgery.
- 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 Dale Rusnik, uncle of Jakob Bennish [’30], who is undergoing treatment for many medical issues.
- For Tricia Ashkettle, who is undergoing treatment for brain cancer.
- For Matthew Gebhart, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- 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 Mattis, 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 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 17th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, August 17th 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: Mary’s Assumption — a life that leads to heaven.

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, August 14: 20 th Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, August 15: Assumption of Mary into Heaven	5:30 PM In Person
Tuesday, August 16:	NO MASS
Wednesday, August 17:	NO MASS
Thursday, August 18:	NO MASS
Friday, August 19:	NO MASS
Saturday, August 20: 21 st Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person
Sunday, August 21: 21 st Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

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

We are beginning to form our RCIA program for this year. If you have been thinking about investigating the Catholic faith, or if you know someone who has been thinking about it; if you have been away from the Catholic Church for a while, or are interested in learning more about the Catholic faith; if you know someone who is not fully initiated [Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation] in their Catholic faith — then consider joining or having them join our RCIA program. **Please contact Father John [440-473-3560] for more information.**



HOW TO STAY COMPASSIONATE:

As children, as far as our awareness of things went, we had an elementary capacity for compassion. But our capacity did not develop over the years in proportion to the growth of our understanding. This was uncomfortable and bewildering. We noticed so many people who no longer had compassion or empathy. Then we, too, suppressed our sensitivity so as to be like everyone else. We did not want to be different from them, and we did not know what to do. Thus many people become like houses in which one story after another has been vacated

—Albert Schweitzer

REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

Have you ever had to deliver a message to someone who you know will find your words to be “hard to take”? Life is like that at times. In fact, there are times when we have to deliver the message to ourselves — and that doesn’t make it any easier.

Let that serve as an introduction to our Scripture Readings for this 20th Week in Ordinary Time. Jeremiah has been speaking from his faith and heart to the soldiers and people of the city of Jerusalem. There is a war going on, and Jerusalem is surrounded with the army of Babylon. Jeremiah is experiencing the consequences of the burning-word of God within him — he has been telling everybody to surrender and all will go well. This does not go well with the soldiers and the royal officials who complain to King Zedekiah who turns Jeremiah over to them.

They put Jeremiah out of commission temporarily as a prophet by dropping him into a dried-up well. Upon hearing this, an official of the King’s court — Ebed-melech relates to the king that the Prophet will die in that well. So the king now relents and has Jeremiah raised out of the cistern and brought to him for a chat. While we do not hear this conversation, we know that the King does listen to what Jeremiah says, and surrenders to the enemy. This surrender does not result in death, but life to the king, his family, and the city of Jerusalem [Jeremiah 38:4-13].

Christian Spirituality may be defined as living, with the tensions caused by our responding to the invitations of Jesus in the Gospels and in our lives. Tensions are a part of every relationship and what we hear in today’s Gospel Reading is full of them. The big question is whether there can be peace while experiencing tensions.

In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus has been talking about the dangers of greed and about the followers of Jesus who must stay awake, attentive, and responsive as servants of the serving-Lord. Jesus is inviting His followers into a real relationship in which selfishness, uncaring, violence, and irreverence is confronted.

Those following Jesus have all the human characteristics as we do. Jesus recognizes this tension, and tells his disciples that he has come “not to establish peace on earth” — “Division” is His blazing, heart-driven desire. He refers to this as a “baptism” with which He wishes to immerse the earth [Luke 12:49-53]. Jesus uses the example of family to drive his point home — family unity will be split. This is not an appealing message — as with Jeremiah, Jesus is calling for a decision to surrender. This surrender will cause separation even within loving families.

Our spirituality is centered on our making decisions which allow us to listen to His invitation and as well to the human invitations which cause the Holy Tension that we call Faith. As sacred as family was in the times of Jesus, He speaks right to how Faith calls for decisions and decisions can cause tensions.

I find the “peace” that Jesus came to offer flows from our not allowing our belief in Jesus to separate us from, but rather to unite us to His family members our sisters and brothers.

This will sometimes cause tensions, but tensions prove the quality of His relationship with us and us with Him and within ourselves.

I know a family whose teenage son has declared that he is an atheist. Atheism is a God-given right. What is probably going on is that the mother and father are no longer to be considered gods and lords of this young-person’s life. Jesus is asking for a little more thought and a decision to follow Him and His ways. King Zedekiah had to make such a decision and the followers of Jesus have all had to do the same. The big decision is to move outside the city-walls of our senses and the security of those walls. Trusting, walking into the dark, going without knowing — these are tremendous violations of our present-day cultural ways.

**CALLED TO BE A PROPHET?**

Years ago there was a horrible accident at one of our local amusement parks — a woman was thrown from a roller coaster type ride and killed. The investigation following the accident showed her death was totally preventable. She simply hadn’t been “locked in.” The young man in charge of that function was too embarrassed to tell her that because she was overweight he couldn’t click the latch on the belt which would have held her on the ride.

Many of us can identify with that worker. We’d also like to live as hassle-free a life as possible — avoiding situations which would create tension between ourselves and others. On one hand, he certainly avoided the tension which could have resulted from telling her she was too obese to be on that ride. But on the other hand, his reluctance to speak out cost her life.

All of God’s prophets frequently find themselves in parallel situations. They’re chosen by God or the risen Jesus to be the conscience of the people — they are called to proclaim God’s word. Yet, the Scripture Readings for this 20th Week in Ordinary Time give us many good reasons why prophets are often tempted to keep their mouths shut — “Jeremiah ought to be put to death,” the princes say [Jeremiah 38:4-13]. One way to make certain that the prophet doesn’t deliver God’s word is to kill the prophet — works every time.

Though Jeremiah is eventually delivered from the princes’ hands, I presume every time he opened his mouth again to tell the people what the Lord wanted of them, he remembered this near miss. The next time he might not be so lucky. In fact, there comes a time for Jeremiah when he wishes that he had never been born! [see Jeremiah 20].

This “prophecy thing” is very important for Christians. The earliest Christian author, Paul, presumes each of our communities is blessed with at least one person who has the Spirit’s gift of prophecy. He’s convinced that other Christs can’t function correctly unless their members understand what the risen Jesus wishes them to do. That seems to be one of the reasons that Luke’s Jesus wants his followers to know that he “has come to set the earth on fire. Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division” [Luke 12:49-53]. Those who dare imitate him must be aware of the divisions in society such an imitation will bring about.

Perhaps that’s why the unknown author of the Letter to the Hebrews insists that we constantly “keep our eyes fixed on Jesus” [Hebrews 11:32-33, 12:1-4]. Only by focusing on him will we be able “to persevere in running the race that lies before us.”

Before any of Jesus’ disciples suspected he was divine, they were certain he was a prophet [see John 4:19]. Though he never demanded that they imitate his divinity, they knew from the beginning he expected them to integrate some of his burning prophetic charism into their own lives.

Normally we expect our sacred authors to tear into their readers for not listening to the prophets and carrying out their words. But both the author of Hebrews and Luke’s gospel look at prophecy from the other side. Both tear into us for not being brave enough to proclaim even the small bit of God’s word with which the Spirit has gifted us. Though the vast majority of us aren’t “full-time” prophets, as other Christs we frequently run into situations in which we say nothing where something should be said. We shouldn’t pretend to be overly pious, but especially among family and friends neither, for instance, should we hesitate to confront racial or prejudicial remarks. Certainly wouldn’t want anyone close to us to be flung off the ride.

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



By this stage, Jesus knew full well that his message threatened powerful people. He also knew that Scripture and tradition testified that prophets never fare well with anyone whose plans and schemes do not prioritize the common good.

Although Jesus' community turned primarily to the prophet Isaiah to help them interpret Jesus, all the prophets were his forerunners and their lives provided a good foretaste of what he would experience as God's messenger.

On this 20th Week in Ordinary Time, we hear about Jeremiah, the best complainer among the prophets of Israel. As we meet Jeremiah, he has been dealing with a king who wanted to know God's will, but lacked the courage to obey it. Jeremiah knows and tells his people that they are in an unwinnable war. For saying that, the military leaders decide to get rid of him — his truth-telling is demoralizing and they prefer affirmation to reality [Jeremiah 38:4-13].

What we hear today is but one of many times Jeremiah was persecuted or nearly killed for the message he preached. What gives prophetic people the determination to defy mortal threats? The memory of some of the "cloud of witnesses" mentioned in the Letter to the Hebrews may give us a hint [Hebrews 11:32-33, 12:1-4].

Remember Joan of Arc? Following the instructions of the voices she heard, she saved the reign of King Charles VII of France, but ended up burned at the stake on multiple charges, including heresy [holding fast to her experience of faith rather than obeying church authorities], witchcraft [knowing the secrets of hearts and predicting the outcome of battles] and dressing like a man. The real reason for her death was surely the jealousy of religious and military leaders who lost their cause to the troops she commanded.

Although some of his fellow bishops, clergy and people criticized him, St. Óscar Romero's death came at the command of political leaders who found his defense of the poor and the truth a mortal danger to their rule.

Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, Jean Donovan, and Dorothy Kazel — the 1980 U.S. martyrs in El Salvador — risked and lost their lives simply because of their commitment to share life and faith with the poor.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s preaching about equality and justice brought him multiple threats before an assassin's bullet silenced him.

More recently, two Mexican Jesuits who had long before thrown their lot in with the poor were murdered for harboring a man seeking asylum protection from supposed members of a drug mafia.

Every one of these people was motivated by what the Letter to the Hebrews calls "the joy that lay before them" — their conviction that living the values of the reign of God is worth any cost. Their motivation and conviction were religious, but as religious people acting for the common good, they were inevitably involved in the political as well. As St. James tells us, faith without works is a sham [see James 2:17].

When we ask what Scripture says to us, we might take Jesus' opening line in combination with a phrase from the Letter to the Hebrews. Jesus said: "I have come to set the earth on fire" [Luke 12:49-53]. Hebrews explains that the cloud of witnesses ran the race with their eyes fixed on Jesus who endured everything "for the sake of the joy that lay before him."

It seems that the joy of an earth on fire with the love of God — an earth on fire with God's justice — was the vision that drew Jesus forth. Inspiration from the cloud of witnesses fired with a joyful vision of God's reign on earth reminds us that faith demands action for the common good — no matter the risk.

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



Making decisions is the natural process for us humans — we make thousands of them each day. Our senses take in all kinds of information — some of which we accept, some discard, and much we are not aware of. Our minds move us to a "yes" or "no" — that is what the will does. We can eat peanut butter, and our minds would still say that peanut butter ice cream is a big "no". So, our imaginations can present data to our minds for a choice as well.

A faith-decision to walk the ways of Jesus needs some information which Jesus gives His disciples, but some information has to be provided by our memory and imaginations. We are invited to live less dominated by greed and possessiveness. This is pretty clear, but we would have to imagine what that would mean and our memories would remind us of times when we had nothing. Faith is not easy. Deciding for the unknown future is not easy. Being an atheist is not easy either because it also demands an act of faith.

It is a puzzlement why some believe in a God and others find that impossible and even humorous. The faith to which Jesus invites His followers moves them past the impossible to lives which reflect the very person and mission of Jesus. It is much easier to follow from a safe distance and not have our lives changed by His relationship with us. The good things about this is that Jesus keeps attentively calling all outside the comfort-walls and into the life of real living, which in truth can be quite humorous. Marital love and commitment is a tremendous leap of faith. Love is a faith act, and faith is a love act. It is the commitment that costs and results in insecurity; and who desires that?

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

THE BATTLE IS ON:

Luke's Gospel presents a rather shocking statement of Jesus — "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!" [Luke 12:49-53]. After noting his anguish over his pending passion and death, Jesus adds: "Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division" — a division which will pit even family members against one another.

We see that this is true even in the life of Jesus himself — the fidelity of Jesus to the cause of God generated opposition from his family and hometown friends as well as the religious and political establishment which culminated in his death on the cross. Christ's message can serve as a fiery weapon that attacks personal prejudice, family dysfunction, cultural bias, and societal injustice. Historically, Christ's faithful witnesses have run into a firestorm of opposition as the powerful have protected their privileges with violent persecutions and coercive intimidation.

For example, we can recall the faithful witness of the Czech priest, Vaclav Maly, who just a year after his ordination in 1976, signed Charter 77 demanding that the Communist regime respect human rights. Over the next 12 years, Valcav was under constant surveillance, arrested and interrogated over 250 times, and on one occasion brutally tortured — all in an effort to make him soften his criticism of the Communist government. Relying totally on Christ who brought fire to the earth, Fr. Maly persevered as a faithful witness to Gospel truth — playing a major role in the Velvet Revolution which toppled the government in 1989, and led to the election of the playwright Vaclav Havel. Maly declined the opportunity to participate in the government, opting instead to continue to share in Christ's mission as a priest and later as a bishop.

In a lengthy private conversation with Maly in Prague, he reminded me that Christians in the United States have an obligation to stand up for Gospel truth against the dominating idols of our culture — consumerism and individualism. His example encourages us to resist those destructive trends as completely as possible — just as he refused to soften even slightly his criticism of the totalitarian government. How can you be a more faithful witness to Christ who came to set the earth on fire?

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



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BELIEF:

Of the four Gospel accounts written by Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, St. Luke's has been characterized by some scripture scholars as the most beautiful of them all. St. Luke's Gospel contains accounts of the events surrounding Jesus' birth, for instance. Mary — the mother of Jesus — has a special place in his Gospel. Moreover, St. Luke has a special regard for women, for the hurting, the outcasts, and those who were seen to be at the bottom of the social heap in those days. The tender and compassionate heart of Jesus is prominent in St. Luke's accounts of His life.

Given that context it's startling to hear the words of Luke's Gospel for this 20th Week in Ordinary Time [Luke 12:49-53]. Whatever happened to the Christmas message about peace on earth and good will toward all men and women? How do we understand the words of the Prince of Peace that we just heard in Luke's Gospel?

There are those who think of Jesus as being accepting and tolerant in all things and toward all people. The truth is that He was not. Had He accepted anything and everything, He would never have been put to death in a horrible crucifixion. His teaching and His way of living enraged the religious and political power brokers of His day. He lived in a time when ties to family were far more important than they are in our culture. So how do we explain the words of Jesus we just heard?

We need to face some issues. Take, for instance, the assumption made by many that understanding is the equivalent of acceptance. But does the fact that I understand someone mean that I accept whatever he or she thinks and does? Hardly! Nor should you.

Long ago, a very wise person taught: "In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity." That is very wise indeed. But how do we interpret it? Does charity, compassion, understanding, and love require that we accept anything and everything? Does turning the other cheek mean something similar? Hardly!



Compromise is a difficult concept for us, just as love is difficult to live. When should we compromise and when should we not compromise? When should we trouble others or get ourselves in trouble with them, and when not? And just what will we compromise, anyway? Should we ever compromise our beliefs and our values? No — and certainly not in the culture of our day.

When Jesus tells us that He has come to bring division and not peace, He's telling us that peace is not to be found at any price. There is a cost to genuine peace. Anything else is simply the absence of conflict. The long Cold War with the Soviet Communists following the Second World War was merely the absence of armed conflict. We were not really at peace with them. Some husbands and wives live with each other in a sort of "cold war" with no real peace in their homes. Some families do also.

The problem we have in so many areas of our lives is the problem of causing trouble — particularly when we know that we should confront others. Being a "people pleaser" leads to a lot of internal strife, stress, and eventual emotional depression. Conflict avoidance solves nothing.

When people make fun of our Christian faith — or of our Catholic faith in particular — do we laugh and go along with them, or do we challenge them? When the group we're in wants to do things we know are wrong, do we simply go along with them? Certain business practices ought to bother us. They need to be challenged. Sexual promiscuity so prevalent in our culture has cheapened the meaning of intimacy. Lots and lots of people are lonely and feel taken for granted because intimacy has lost its value. Its currency has been cheapened because it has been devalued.

When do we stand up for our convictions? So many times we are told that if we stand for our convictions we are being "mean-spirited" and hateful; or that we are prejudiced and divisive; or that we

anti-clericalism than in a time within which priests and church are unduly privileged. It is far easier to live the gospel in the former situation. Thus, we, inside the church, should have a curious gratitude for all that anger that is being directed against us today. Besides, as Chesterton points out — paraphrasing Jesus — the church will always be hated.

Our own culture creates a category of persons that it deems expendable and then subsequently victimizes through exclusion, ridicule, scapegoating — and often through actual death. The point here is not to defend the church, but to make a critical point about God and the theology of God — a theology which is often grossly misunderstood.

And the point is this: Christianity is the only religion which worships the scapegoat, the one who is hated, excluded, spat upon, blamed for everything, ridiculed, shamed, and made expendable. Christianity is the only religion that focuses on imitating the victim and which sees God in the one who is surrounded by the halo of hatred.

There are some important lessons to be learned from this — not the least of which has to do with where we see God, truth, and goodness. We need, today, some correctives since we live in a culture which, not unlike most cultures in the past, scapegoats some persons to the benefit of the others, and then identifies God and holiness with those who have created the scapegoats.

God is not to be confusedly identified with the myths of success, power, glamour, and popularity. Never confuse God and what is holy with current cultural religion which, antithetical to Christ, worships the included, the glamorous, the ones who aren't shamed and ridiculed, and the ones who seem important and indispensable. The God of our culture and the God that is preached in so many of our churches is not the God who dies on a cross, is hated, spat upon, and is excluded and scapegoated in ignorance. Our culture does not worship a crucified God. The God Jesus revealed, is still, in our very own culture, excluded, mocked, scapegoated, made expendable, and often killed, mostly in the name of God and truth. Where do we see this?

Our own culture — like every other culture past and present — creates a category of persons that it deems expendable and then subsequently victimizes through exclusion, ridicule, scapegoating, and often through actual death. Who constitutes that category shifts slightly from time to time, but there is always a common denominator, it includes always those who are the weakest.

Thus, for instance, our culture, marginalizes and scapegoats the sick, the poor, the handicapped, the unborn, the unattractive, the non-productive, and the aged. These we deem expendable and subsequently decertify in terms of full status within the human race. Worse still, we identify God and holiness with those who are doing the excluding. But that is antithetical to true religion — and true wisdom.

Where is God? God is on the side of the victim, standing with the one who is excluded, especially present in the one being ridiculed, and dying in the one who is being put to death. True Christianity knows this: It worships the scapegoat — the one who is surrounded by the halo of hatred.

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

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES IS INSPIRING:

"I have come to set the earth on fire!" [Luke 49-53]. Sweet holy card images aside, Jesus was no wimp! Nor could he be apolitical. In our trip through the Gospel of Luke, we have passed a dividing line — a measure not of words or chapters, but of intensity. Luke's Gospel continually points Jesus' life as a journey to Jerusalem. Not long after Jesus first told the disciples that the mission they were sharing would entail suffering and death [see Luke 9:22-23], he purposely set out to confront his fate in Jerusalem.

The Gospel of John tells us that when Jesus decided to go to Jerusalem, Thomas looked at the others and said: "Let us also go to die with him" [John 11:16]. They had no reason to think that the rest of the story would be a picnic — Jesus and everyone identified with him were headed toward inevitable conflict with religious and civil authorities.



beginning of a seventy-year exile which the prophets in general interpreted much the same way Jeremiah did — Israel had sinned and God was punishing them [Jeremiah 38:4-13].

Jesus of course got into trouble, too. The things he said were not directly political. They were generally religious, but they sometimes had political repercussions, so eventually, the powers that be could not stand it any longer and they plotted his death.

Jesus is always saying challenging things. But the ones Jesus makes to his disciples on this 20th Week in Ordinary Time are also startling and puzzling — “Do you think I have come to bring peace on the earth? I assure you the contrary is true; I have come for division” [Luke 12:49-53]. What’s this? Jesus has come for division? Wouldn’t you think the opposite was true? That Jesus had indeed come for peace, to put back together what had been divided by sin? So what is going on here?

Well, first of all, Jesus did not come in order to bring the kind of division he talks about. Rather division occurs because some people accept Jesus and his teaching and some people do not. This was certainly a situation the Jesus knew in his own lifetime, and the community that Luke was writing for had experienced the same thing. Families indeed were divided according to how they accepted or did not accept Jesus.

Now, what has all of this got to do with us? It seems to me the kind of division Jesus was talking about still exists — in our city, in our nation, in our world, in our church. And still today, the people who try to point this out are arrested, vilified, even killed. Think of Dorothy Day who was an embarrassment to the church in the beginning; think of the Berrigan brothers whom Catholics denounced as insane and traitorous; think of those who were martyred — Oscar Romero, the Jesuits and their housekeepers in El Salvador, Martin Luther King Junior, countless others, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, who had the courage to stand up to the powers that be and say: “You are wrong.”

As I contemplate the Jesus of Luke’s Gospel, I hear him say to me: “Don’t think that I came to bring an easy peace to this world. I came to bring peace, yes, but I didn’t come to mask the misery of the world, so that nobody can see it anymore. Don’t think I came to pull a blanket over all the coldness of human relations so that the shivering can no longer be felt. No, I didn’t come to bring that kind of peace. I came to bring a fight, a battle, a struggle, a fire to undo all the evil in the world.” And then I see him look me right in the eye and say: “You, you should join in my fight against that evil, against that sin.”

It sounds pretty dire, doesn’t it, pretty grim? It’s a challenge, of course, and it’s not all as somber as it might seem to be. The passage from the letter to the Hebrews reminds us of our destiny once the struggle is over [Hebrews 11:32-33, 12:1-4]. The Irish have a wonderful way of talking about the good times that come after the bad. They even describe heaven this way. They say it is the tavern at the end of the road where all together we will lift the cup — very earthy imagery and very Irish. But describe it any way you want. The point is it makes all the disciples’ pain — our pain — worthwhile.

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

GOD AS VICTIM:

“And there shone on them in that dark hour a light that has never darkened; a white fire clinging to that group like an unearthly phosphorescence, blazing its track through the twilights of history and confounding every effort to confound it with the mists of mythology and theory; that shaft of light or lightning by which the world itself has struck and isolated and crowned it; by which its own enemies have made it more illustrious and its own critics have made it more inexplicable; the halo of hatred around the Church of God.” G.K. Chesterton wrote those words more than sixty years ago. One of the things that, for him, gave the church credibility is the fact that, invariably, it is surrounded by a halo of hatred.

I quote his words, not as an attempt to offer an apologia for the church today as it suffers through a period within which it is frequently an object of intense hatred. Defensiveness is not the purpose here — especially since I am one of those persons who is not entirely sorry that a lot of anger is currently being directed towards us in the church. Some of this anger is justified after a few centuries of privilege; all of it will, I submit, be helpful in fueling an important period of purification within the church. I would rather be a priest in a time of

are hypocrites. Does being a Christian — or being an American for that matter — mean that we should let anyone do whatever they want? Expressing our opinions and living by our convictions can get us into to trouble.

We are told that religion and our religious values have no place in the public forum. They are a private matter, we are told. In other words, it’s okay to have moral values, but we should keep them to ourselves. But I ask, are there no moral values to be shared as Americans? Is America supposed to be a value free nation?

As Christians, we believe in the dignity of human life and the supreme value of every person from the moment they come into being until the moment they die a natural death. To speak of those values in public challenges and upsets others. What was it Jesus said? — “From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

We need to remember that many of the first Christians were martyred because of their values and beliefs. St. Cecelia, St. Lucy, St. Agatha, and other Roman women were put to death for remaining virgins. King Henry VIII beheaded St. Thomas More, Chancellor of England, because More refused to compromise his beliefs. And that division goes on even today as we speak. There are parts of the world today in which Christians are literally being put to death simply for being Christian.

The events surrounding the birth of Jesus are presented to us in lovely words and beautiful images. We need to recall, however, that the Church remembers her first martyr — St. Stephen — the day after Christmas. And on the day after that we remember slaughter of the innocents — that horrific action on the part of King Herod when he ordered the massacre of all the baby boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under in order that he might not be challenged by the King who is greater than all the other kings in the world put together.

Who, then, brings division, hatred, strife, and conflict into our world? God, or humans? Love or jealousy? Good people or people who cannot stand goodness? You know the answers as well as I do. It’s all a question of what we will stand for. “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you,” Jesus told us [John 15:18]. Jesus was crucified for a reason and we should always remember that.

—taken from the writings of Father Charles Irvin, which appear on the internet

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, August 6]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-in]----- \$ 1,005.00

Offerings-----[Sunday, August 7]----- \$ 372.00

LIVING IN THIS WORLD:

To become like children, Jesus urges us to embrace this world of vulnerability in the face of enormous risk by becoming radically dependent on God and the care of our earthly communities throughout our lives.

—Kristen Drahos

NOT FEARING FIRE:

When we come to Jesus, we do not expect fire. But this is what we get in Luke's gospel [Luke 12:49-53]. When we come to Jesus, we expect consolation and peace, but Jesus' words today are words of conflict and division. What's going on here? First of all, it is important to note that when Jesus says he has come to set the world on fire, he is not speaking prescriptively, but descriptively. That is, he is not prescribing or decreeing that there should be divisions on earth. He is rather describing what will happen in this world when we follow him.

In the imperfect and often unjust world in which we live, speaking the truth, standing up for what is right, is not always welcome. It often causes fire. You just said no to your teenager — "No, you're not going to the mall with your friends, when there's work to be done here at home." "No, you're not going to an unsupervised party, even if everyone else is." There's an angry comment, a slam of the bedroom door, and silence. You have done the right thing, but now there's fire.

It's been a long time coming. You call her into your office and let her know you have to let her go. Many deadlines have been missed. She is not able to keep up with the demanding pace in the office. Her irresponsibility and poor attitude are influencing others. She cleans out her desk and comes into your office to turn in the keys. Not a word is spoken, but you can see in her eyes the rejection and the anger. You have made the right decision, but you have also set things ablaze.

You are out with some friends — maybe at a party, or at lunch period at school. One of them speaks up and cruelly demeans another person because of their religion, race, or their sexual orientation. For a minute you think you will let it slip, but then you speak out against the comment. The people around you are surprised. Some of them hear what you are saying, but others dismiss you as a hopeless fool. You have said the right thing, but you have also caused division.

How wonderful it would be if following Jesus was easy. When we stand for what is right or speak the truth, how great it would be to be greeted by applause. But this is not the world in which we live. So, Jesus is telling us today that if we wish to assist him in building the kingdom of God, if we wish to contribute to making the world better and more just, then we cannot be afraid of fire.

In this sense maybe the words of Jesus are comforting after all. Often when we think of being a disciple or trying to be holy, we imagine ourselves as being docile or peaceful. So, when we do or say things that get people upset or angry, we can begin to worry whether we are really doing what we should. Jesus comforts us in Luke's Gospel. He tells us that speaking the truth and standing for what is right — even if it causes division — is not only compatible with the gospel, but essential to it.

None of us wants to anger or upset people. But avoiding these things cannot be our top priority. Our fundamental obligation is to speak the truth, and to make choices which are right. If we do this, we will be following Jesus — even if we set things on fire.

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

SHARING IN GOD'S ONE SPIRIT:

The Holy Spirit is God's very own life shared with us and residing within us [see John 20:22]. When we pray, we are steadfastly refusing to abandon this Presence — this True Self, this place that already knows we are beloved and one with God. But our false "contrived" self is so needy that we must practice living in this presence through conscious choice — prayer — not just once, but preferably many times every day. Contemplative prayer is "our daily bread" that keeps us nourished so we can dare to believe the Gospel, to trust the Divine Indwelling, and to remember our God-given identity. Gradually, we learn how to abide in this spacious place more and more, how to draw our strength, dignity, and solace from this Stable Source. When we live from this place of conscious unity, we are indestructible.

The True Self cannot really be hurt or offended. The false self — our egoic identity — is offended



Shouldn't she have considered staying alive for the sake of her other three children, her husband, and even her medical practice? These arguments were presented to her by those whom she had respected, doctors, family members, etc. But their thinking was the thinking of the world. Gianna knew that she would accomplish nothing in killing a child to keep her own life. The child that was saved — Gianna Emanuela — followed in her mother's footsteps and is now a medical doctor and consultant to the Saint Gianna Berretta Molla Society.

St. Gianna wrote this prayer: "O Jesus, I promise You to submit myself to all that You permit to befall me, make me only know Your Will. My most sweet Jesus, infinitely merciful God, most tender Father of souls, and in a particular way of the most weak, most miserable, most infirm which You carry with special tenderness between Your divine arms, I come to You to ask You, through the love and merits of Your Sacred Heart, the grace to comprehend and to do always Your holy Will, the grace to confide in You, the grace to rest securely through time and eternity in Your loving divine arms."

The cost of discipleship seldom makes the demand on us that it made on Gianna Molla, but we are all continually confronted with the choice of standing up for our faith, or joining the world that rejects the Lord. One person is encouraged to tear down a coworker with the hope of getting his or her position. Another is mocked for refusing to participate in an immoral gathering. Movies and the media glorify sin and belittle those who reject sin. The tempters themselves often claim to be modern day Christians, but in fact they are promoting the works of evil.

But nothing outside of us can quell the fire that Jesus lit in our hearts. Only we can put the fire out by giving in to the pagan world. We cannot do this. We cannot let anything, any situation put the fire out. We cannot drown it with our own selfishness. So, we keep our eyes focused on Jesus, and as we run the race of our lives we draw Him who leads us closer to ourselves. For the fire that he has set is worth infinitely more than all the so-called reasonable demands of the world.

St. Paul wrote: "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" [1 Corinthians 1:18].

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

IS IT WORTH IT?

I don't know if every family has at least one eccentric relative that provides a lot of laughs — some of it on purpose, and some of it in spite of him or herself. In my family it was my mother's sister — my aunt Mary — whom many referred to fondly as Auntie Mame. Do you all remember Auntie Mame?

Well, my Aunt Mary or Auntie Mame had some interesting ideas about social conduct. She used to say that there were two topics that no one should ever broach in polite company — religion and politics. I'm afraid that neither Jeremiah the prophet nor Jesus would have passed her test for polite company because both of them never hesitated to talk about religion — and even on occasion about politics! And both of them got into trouble for it — especially because they did it in front of the people who most resented it.

Jeremiah did not hesitate to tell the king and the political leaders of his time that their troubles were a punishment from God for their sins. At least that's how Jeremiah interpreted it. And what were their sins? First of all, they had turned their backs on their God and had forgotten the covenant. Second, they were not taking care of the poor as God had reminded them so often was their duty.

What really got the prophet into trouble was his telling the soldiers that they should not bother fighting the Babylonians because they were not going to win. This kind of talk demoralized the army, and as far as the king was concerned it was treason. So, he had Jeremiah thrown into a well and left to die. Fortunately, it was the dry season — there was no water at the bottom of the well. Jeremiah did not drown, but there was plenty of mud and the prophet got very dirty. A foreign dignitary intervened in Jeremiah's behalf, and so he was dragged half dead, and very muddy, from the well. As it turned out he was right. The Babylonians did defeat the Israelites and carried them off into captivity. It was the

FIRE ON THE EARTH:

The readings for this 20th Week in Ordinary Time present us with the challenges of our faith and the challenges to our faith. Jeremiah was thrown into a cistern because he refused to hedge on the faith. He refused to tell the king what the king wanted to hear. He proclaimed the truth that God told him to proclaim, even though it cost him severely [Jeremiah 38:4-13]. The people to whom the Letter to the Hebrews was addressed were tempted to give up the faith — it seemed too difficult to them, too demanding. Further on in the letter, the author of Hebrews would tell them to lift up their drooping hands, and firm up their shaking knees. But at this time, the author, chides them for all their complaining. They had not yet resisted sin to the point of shedding blood [Hebrews 11:32-33, 12:1-4]. They should keep their eyes focused on Jesus, and not be so concerned about their present lives. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus speaks about the cost of discipleship. Families may even be divided over the following of the Lord, but nothing is worth sacrificing the Life of Jesus within us [Luke 12:49-53].

St. Gianna Berretta Molla understood this so well, and all its implications. Hers was one of the last canonizations by Pope St. John Paul II on May 16, 2004. She is a modern saint — she died on April 28, 1962. Her husband and children were present for her canonization. We haven't heard a whole lot about her in the United States.

Gianna Berretta was a doctor living outside of Milan, Italy. She had a double residency and practice in pediatrics and obstetrics and gynecology. After she finished her residencies, her desire to reach out to people influenced her to open a clinic in a small town in her native Italy. She was not a wealthy doctor. She never hesitated to give her services free to those who could not afford to pay. A good doctor works long hours and Gianna was no exception. Pregnant mothers felt so secure in her care because they knew no matter what time of night they needed her, she would be there for them.

After becoming a doctor, Gianna met and became engaged to the man of her dreams — Pietro Molla. She had found a man who agreed with her determination to live her faith. She told her future husband: "I really want a Christian family, where God is one of the family; a little cenacle where He can reign in our hearts, enlighten our decisions and guide our programs." They were married on September 24, 1955. In November, 1956 — to her great joy — she became the mother of Pierluigi; in December, 1957 of Mariolina; in July, 1959 of Laura. With simplicity and equilibrium, she harmonized the demands of mother and wife, and continued the practice as a doctor with all the passion that she had for life.

In 1961, Gianna became pregnant with her fourth child. In September — towards the end of the second month of pregnancy — she was touched by suffering and the mystery of pain. She had developed a tumor in her uterus. She was given the choice of having the uterus removed — thus killing the child — or risk surgery that might save the child but kill her. She was an OB-GYN. She knew the risk that her continued pregnancy brought, but she pleaded with the surgeon to save the life of the child she was carrying, and entrusted herself to prayer and Providence. The baby's life was saved, for which she thanked the Lord. She spent the seven months remaining until the birth of the child in incomparable strength of spirit and unrelenting dedication to her tasks as mother and doctor. She worried that the baby in her womb might be born in pain, and she asked God to prevent that.

A few days before the child was due, although trusting as always in Providence, she was ready to give her life in order to save that of her child. She repeated to her husband: "If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate — 'choose the child; I insist on it. Save the child.'" On the morning of April 21, 1962, Gianna Emanuela was born. Despite all efforts and treatments to save both of them, on the morning of April 28, amid repeated exclamations of "Jesus, I love you. Jesus, I love you," Gianna Berretta Molla died. She was 39 years old.

Was Gianna foolish for making the decision to allow her death rather than the death of her child?



every few minutes. But if we notice when we take offence, and what part of us is offended — always a provisional identity — this will train us to gradually reside more and more in the Big Truth. This is what Jesus' final prayer at the Last Supper is all about [see John 14-16]. Thomas Keating charts conversion as a series of necessary humiliations to the false self.

In order to fully experience the intrinsic union we already have with God, who is Love, it seems that we need to first be love ourselves in some foundational way. Contemplation helps us to rest in this love; as we gradually take on the likeness of love, we will see love over there too. What you see is what you are. That's why Jesus absolutely commanded us to love. This is necessary for the mirroring process to begin! Our inner state of love is alone able to receive and reflect the ultimate outer Love [see 2 Corinthians 3:18].

Sometimes people will come up to me and say: "Oh, Richard, you're so loving!" But I know that I'm not — and I know they are! They are seeing themselves in me. Spirit recognizes Spirit. To know the Truth, one must somehow be abiding in that Truth, and the deepest Truth of every human is Love, as we are created in the image and likeness of an infinitely Loving God [see Genesis 1:26-27], which Christians call Trinity.

If we are in a state of negativity — what Julian of Norwich calls "contrariness" — we won't be love or see love. We must watch for this contrariness. This contrary self often takes three forms — comparison, competition, and contrariness or oppositional energy. Our false self is actually relieved and empowered when it has something to oppose. The clearest identifier of untransformed people is that they are living out of oppositional energy, with various just show how others are wrong or inferior.

The True Self needs none of these games to know who it is — it is a child of God, sharing in God's own Spirit.

—taken from the writings of Father Richard Rohr, O.F.M., which appear on the internet

**THE GREAT CROWD OF WITNESSES:**

In today's second reading we hear about a "great cloud of witnesses" [Hebrews 11:32-33, 12:1-4]. The author is referring to saints who have preceded us. Now, like fans in a stadium they cheer us on to keep running the race. That great cloud of witnesses is the Communion of Saints — men and women who throughout history have set the example of faith.

I think of Eric Liddel — the young man depicted in *Chariots of Fire*. Once, when he was starting a race, he was tripped — probably by accident. The others got a good lead. Incredibly, Eric not only stood up, but started running so hard that he actually won the race! You and I stumble — maybe even get tripped by others. We might even stumble daily. What matters is getting up again.

A great cloud of witnesses cheers us on. As Hebrews reminds us: "persevere in running the race." Think for a moment about your life. Who brought you to this moment in your faith? Who led you to Christ — who became the voice of Christ — that brought you to this moment? We help and encourage each other. And we do have that cloud of witnesses.

After speaking about the cloud of witnesses, Hebrews tells us to have our eyes fixed on Jesus. And what does Jesus want? In Luke's Gospel, Jesus says that he wants to set the earth on fire [Luke 12:49-53]. It's the fire of love — of immersion in the Holy Trinity through baptism and Eucharist.

I invite you, I encourage you, I beg you to run the race — keep participating in the sacraments, especially Holy Mass. With that great cloud of witnesses cheering us on, let's rid ourselves of every burden and sin; let us persevere in running the race, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus.

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

AFTER THE GOLD — AN INTERVIEW WITH GABBY DOUGLAS:

Ten years ago, Gabby Douglas wowed the world at the 2012 Summer Olympics when she won the gold medal in gymnastics in both the team and the individual all-around competitions. Gabby also became the backbone of our 2016 team, although she didn't repeat that amazing performance. Her life was into a movie by *Lifetime*.

With all the fame you'd think that Gabby would be too-cool-for-everything. But she's an incredibly down-to-earth, God-loving, young woman who's not that different from you or me. After her movie just came out, she had some time to answer some questions about her life — how she's gotten through trials, and what she hopes you take away from the movie. Here's the interview:

Can you tell me about your faith journey? When did you become a Christian and how has that relationship with God impacted both your life and your gymnastics? You know, faith plays a big role in my life. It started when I was very young. My mom involved my siblings and I in the faith — she introduced us to the Bible and taught us about Jesus, and it's been a part of my life for such a long time. We do Bible studies, and if you watched the Olympics footage or any footage, you can see my mouth moving — that's me praying. I always have to pray before a competition.

Has anyone ever made fun of you for your belief in God or for praying? Not that I've really come across. A lot of people have been coming up to me and saying thank you for saying all the stuff that you did about your faith. If someone's going through that, then I'd tell them to pay no mind to that person who's making fun of you. Keep to your own resolve and whatever works for you. Just keep doing it, and who knows? Maybe down the road if you're praying you can inspire other teens to pray or say motivational things to help them.

You've struggled sometimes with being bullied and have had some hard times. What advice would you give to somebody who maybe feels defeated or feels like others are trying to hold them down to make themselves better? If they're being bullied, I'd tell them to speak up, tell an adult or a friend, and if you feel like you've been defeated just keep going. And I know that may sound like: "What, keep going? But I'm so down." I had a point in my life when I had my ups and downs, and six months before the Olympics I wanted to quit because I was at my lowest point. I was homesick and things in the gym were getting really hard for me since I was pressed for time because of the Olympics, and I wanted to quit and work at Chic-Fil-A or do another sport. But it was my foundation that kept me on track, saying: "hey, please don't give up." So guys, if you feel defeated, keep going. You don't want to look back and have regrets. Just keep pushing through and you guys can do it.

It can be easy to doubt God's plan during those times of hardship. What would you say to someone who is doubting God's plan for their life? I'd say "don't doubt and trust!" I had to stop with the "what-if's." If I'm like... what if I don't make it? What if... I had to stop with that and just believe. If you just trust and believe then everything's going to be okay. If we doubt and if we fear — then it's going to happen. If I'm on the beam and I'm thinking "oh my gosh, what if I fall?" I'm going to fall because I'm thinking it. I would tell those teens just don't doubt and just believe.

You're only 18, and you've already accomplished so much in your life. How do you stay grounded and humble through it all? Well I'm really blessed to have such a supportive family. And they definitely keep me grounded. My sisters, my brother, my mom — we were just raised up just being



humble, and my mom taught us to never forget where you came from. My mom definitely raised us well, and my faith also keeps me grounded and humble. Gymnastics kept me humble and down to earth too because I realized when I start getting cocky and being like yes I can do this, I started messing up more. So in gymnastics you have to be very disciplined. So it's all the different sorts of things that keep my head from being too blown up.

So, what do you want people to remember about your career and your life? I just hope that they'll become inspired and motivated in their own lives and to think okay if she can do it then I can do it. If she can overcome the obstacles that she overcame, then I can overcome this one in my life and I'm going to go after my dream and achieve my goals, and I won't let anything or anyone stop me.

—taken from the writings of Christina Mead, who is on the Life Teen staff

LIFE TEEN and EDGE:

Our Life Teen and EDGE youth group is meeting in-person again. We will meet for an hour beginning at 11:30 AM following our 10 AM Sunday Mass in the Lennon Board



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

**LIKE A CHILD:**

One of the characteristics of infants is that they are often seen — especially in the spiritual sense, as innocent. In his essay, *The Recovery of Paradise*, Thomas Merton writes of the Desert Fathers and their search for "lost innocence," which they saw as the emptiness and purity of heart which had belonged to Adam and Eve in Eden. They sought paradise in the recovery of that "unity" which had been shattered by the "knowledge of good and evil" [[see Genesis 2 and 3]. This unity that had been lost was, as the Desert Fathers saw it, the unity of being one with Christ.

Jesus' teaching tells us that the gift of being like a child is vital and necessary for entry to the kingdom — it is a command: "unless" [see Matthew 18 and Luke 13]. This extraordinary teaching is consistent in the three synoptic gospels, but the meaning of the teaching is less clear. In fact the mystery of what it might all mean is revealed only to babies and toddlers. In other words those who are not yet able to speak: "At that time, Jesus said: 'I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants'" [Matthew 11:25]. The message is that for us to see and to be close to God, we have to relinquish the part of us that feels important and knowledgeable as a grown-up, and turn in a state of not-knowing to God.

Moving from knowledge to innocence regained is a way of temptation and struggle; it is a matter of wrestling with supreme difficulties and overcoming obstacles that seem, and indeed are, beyond human strength.

Gardner compares Jesus' teaching in Matthew to a Zen koan, which invites listeners to hold two contradictory statements together until a new awareness arises: "If we consider Jesus' command to the would-be adult disciples to become as small children as equivalent to a koan, then the work is to hold the lost innocence and the knowledge until the breakthrough can emerge." As Merton knew from his reading on the Desert Fathers and his own spiritual practice, it is not possible as an adult to regain innocence without knowledge.

Purity of heart is the recovery of divine likeness where the true self is lost in God. This as Merton writes is "only a return to the true beginning." For this is where Christ is — in the beginning and in the becoming. This is the rebirth or a fresh start where Merton believed the preparation took place — "for the real work of God which is revealed in the Bible: the work of the new creation, the resurrection from the dead, the resurrection of all things in Christ."

—taken from the writings of Father Richard Rohr, which appears on the internet