

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

**~ Prayer of a Native American ~**

O Great Spirit, who art before all else and who dwells in every object, in every person and in every place, we cry unto Thee. We summon Thee from the far places into our present awareness.

O Great Spirit of the North, who gives wings to the waters of the air and rolls the thick snowstorm before Thee, Who covers the Earth with a sparkling crystal carpet above whose deep tranquillity every sound is beautiful. Temper us with strength to withstand the biting blizzards, yet make us thankful for the beauty which follows and lies deep over the warm Earth in its wake.

O Great Spirit of the East, the land of the rising Sun, Who holds in Your right hand the years of our lives and in Your left the opportunities of each day. Brace us that we may not neglect our gifts nor lose in laziness the hopes of each day and the hopes of each year.

O Great Spirit of the South, whose warm breath of compassion melts the ice that gathers round our hearts, whose fragrance speaks of distant springs and summer days, dissolve our fears, melt our hatreds, kindle our love into flames of true and living realities. Teach us that he who is truly strong is also kind, he who is wise tempers justice with mercy, he who is truly brave matches courage with compassion.

O Great Spirit of the West, the land of the setting Sun, with Your soaring mountains and free, wide rolling prairies, bless us with knowledge of the peace which follows purity of striving and the freedom which follows like a flowing robe in the winds of a well-disciplined life. Teach us that the end is better than the beginning and that the setting sun glorifies not in vain.

O Great Spirit of the heavens, in the day's infinite blue and amid the countless stars of the night season, remind us that you are vast, that you are beautiful and majestic beyond all of our knowing or telling, but also that you are no further from us than the tilting upwards of our heads and the raising of our eyes.

O Great Spirit of Mother Earth beneath our feet, Master of metals, Germinator of seeds and the Storer of the Earth's unreckoned resources, help us to give thanks unceasingly for Your present bounty.

O Great Spirit of our souls, burning in our heart's yearning and in our innermost aspirations, speak to us now and always so that we may be aware of the greatness

**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 will begin “in person” on Sunday, September 25<sup>th</sup> at 8:45 AM. With that in mind, it is very important that you register your child if you have not already done so. As has been our custom in the past, our Faith Education Classes are followed by our 10 AM Mass which is held in the chapel. 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 ANIMALS — OCTOBER 2:**

On Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, our Chapel community will gather after Mass at 11:35 AM to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. In the spirit of this celebration, we welcome your family to bring your pet to be blessed. If you cannot bring your pet, bring a photo to share. Weather permitting we will meet this year — because of COVID-19 — outside in the Red Brick part of Pender Circle [right outside the Chapel]. If it rains on this day, the event will be postponed until the following Sunday. We hope you can join us!

**BLANKET SUNDAY IS OCTOBER 9-10:**

The weekend of October 8-9 marks the annual Blanket Sunday Collection to aid the needy. The collection is sponsored by the Diocesan St. Vincent de Paul Society. This year, as in the past few, the collection will be a cash only collection. We will gratefully accept your cash donations and do the shopping for you, making your money go even further with bulk purchases of blankets and other items needed by low income families. So give someone a blanket for the winter — and give yourself a warm feeling! Use the special Blanket Sunday Envelope [on the table] or mark your envelope Blanket Sunday Collection and we will take it from there. You may also donate on line at [www.svdpcle.org](http://www.svdpcle.org). Thank you.

**WOMEN'S DAY OF RETREAT — SAVE THE DATE:**

Tuesday, October 11<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM. We will begin with Mass together in the Chapel, and then move to the Lennon Boardroom to continue our prayer and reflection together. Because of COVID, it has been several since we gathered together for this time of Spiritual Renewal. Father John will facilitate our evening of reflection. There is no cost for the evening. [ If you can't make it for Mass, come anyway when you can. It will be a wonderful evening of spiritual renewal. So mark the date on your calendars and give yourself a treat in the Lord. Sign up on the retreat sheet which is located on the easel which in the narthex of the Chapel, or call Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560].

**MEN'S DAY OF RETREAT — SAVE THE DATE:**

Thursday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM. We will begin with Mass together in the Chapel, and then move to the Lennon Boardroom to continue our prayer and reflection together. Because of COVID, it has been several since we gathered together for this time of Spiritual Renewal. Father John will facilitate our evening of reflection. There is no cost for the evening. [ If you can't make it for Mass, come anyway when you can. It will be a wonderful evening of spiritual renewal. So mark the date on your calendars and give yourself a treat in the Lord. Sign up on the retreat sheet which is located on the easel which in the narthex of the Chapel, or call Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560].

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For Judy Collins, aunt of Chief Academic Officer, Elizabeth Edmondson, great-aunt of Mollie ['21] and Abbie ['23] Edmondson, who is undergoing treatment for brain cancer.
- For Melanie Lowrey, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Emma Yuhas, who is recovering from major surgery.
- For Madeleine Popp, mother of Gilmour CFO, Kathy Popp, who is ill.
- For Ursula Wyras, mother of Janet Heryak, and Grandmother of Lillian ['09], Rosa ['12] and Edwin ['17] Heryak, who is recovering from Knee Replacement surgery.
- For Joanna Bonner, aunt of Food Service Associate Director, Bonnie Bonner, who is seriously ill with bone cancer.
- For Cathy Locigno, who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.
- For Anna Emerick, who is undergoing testing for possible Parkinson Disease
- For Marie Borovic and Dennis Gruske, who are ill.
- For Holy Cross Brother Donald Allen, who is under the care of hospice.
- For Phil Patrick, former Gilmour employee, and currently an employee of Archbishop Hoban HS, who is recovering from amputation surgery.

**FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Ronald Swencki, father of Paul ['85] and Mark ['88] Swencki
- For Jack Rath, grandfather of Lilly ['22], and Liam ['24] Colaluca, and Jack ['11] and Peter ['14] Dolan.
- For Queen Elizabeth II
- For William Stepanek, father of William Stepanek ['76], John ['78], Michael ['79], Timothy ['82], and Brian ['89] Stepanek.
- For Sadie Tackla
- For Jack Borkey, Gilmour trustee, father of Jeff ['80], Joseph ['82], Jerrod ['87] Borkey, and grandfather of Jerrod ['12], Christian ['16], and former Gilmour students, Joseph, Brendon, and Ian Borkey.
- For Jack Sheehan, grandfather of Audrey ['13], and Mary ['15] Sheehan
- For Richard Guardiola ['54], brother of Donald Guardiola ['57].

**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.

**SPIRITUALITY:**

Spirituality provides the tools necessary to develop empathy, temperament, impulse control, sustainable relationships, social responsibility, authentic leadership and problem-solving skills. —Matthew Kelly

**PATIENCE:**

2 Patience smooths away lots of difficulties.

—St. John Bosco

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

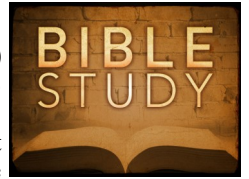
**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For William Rogal, father of Music Minister, Jill Rogal, who is undergoing treatment for kidney issues.
- For Curtis Jackson, incoming Freshman at St. Edward HS, who was critically injured as an innocent bystander in a shooting.
- For Sabrina Kumar, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Marina McCarter, grandmother of Aaron [\*25] and Mason [\*28] McCarter, who is ill
- For Joe Weber [\*52], who is seriously ill.
- For Michael Bares, brother of James [\*80] Bares and Religion Instructor, Eileen Pryatel, uncle of Michael [\*08], Steven [\*10], 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 Sharon Wilson, wife of Brother Ken's nephew, who is undergoing treatment for 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 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 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 Mary Goers who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.
- For Bernice Girgash, aunt of Basketball Coach and Counselor, Dan DeCrane, and great-aunt of Mackenzie DeCrane [\*36], 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 Chiacchiari, mother of Mark [\*94], mother-in-law of Michelle DeBacco [\*96], grandmother of Aurelia [\*28] and Olivia [\*30] Chiacchiari, 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 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



**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14<sup>th</sup>:**

**Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM.** Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God's word. It's a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can't come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God's word.



**Our topic: Brokenness and Repentance.**

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, September 11: 24 <sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, September 12:	NO MASS
Tuesday, September 13: St. John Chrysostom	NO MASS
Wednesday, September 14: Exaltation of the Holy Cross	NO MASS
Thursday, September 15: Our Lady of Sorrows	NO MASS
Friday, September 16: St. Cornelius	NO MASS
Saturday, September 17: 25 <sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person
Sunday, September 18: 25 <sup>th</sup> 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.**



**LIFE TO ITS FULLEST:**

Each of us has a personal and unique relationship with God. For this relationship to grow and flourish, we have to spend quality time alone with him — just the two of us. — Father John Bartunek

**A REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME:**

In the Scripture Readings for this 25<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time, hear about honesty and integrity and decency. The Prophet, Amos, tells us not to steal from those who can least afford it. You'd think that would be obvious, but it wasn't then and it isn't now. Of course, we shouldn't cheat or steal from anyone. Of course, we shouldn't take advantage of the vulnerable, but people have and still do. It wasn't right then and it isn't right now.

Unfortunately, not everyone acts decently and appropriately. Unfortunately, some people — even some leaders — do take advantage of the vulnerable. And that behavior needs to be nipped in the bud. People who cannot be trusted in a small matter have not proven themselves trustworthy. If someone would steal a small thing, they would surely steal something bigger. If they can't be trusted in a small matter, how could they be trusted for something bigger and more important. Someone who would take advantage of a vulnerable person for their own means could not be trusted to treat a "more important" person appropriately. Because, who is more important? Our job is to treat all God's people decently and appropriately, and take proper care of all God's creation.

There are many things in living our faith-life that are not mentioned in the Gospels. As we go through life, we strive to live out the words of Scripture as well as what in our lives is part of the mystery of the personal relationship God has with us. In this way we will never know for sure how we are doing — and that's just the way Jesus invites us to live in faith.

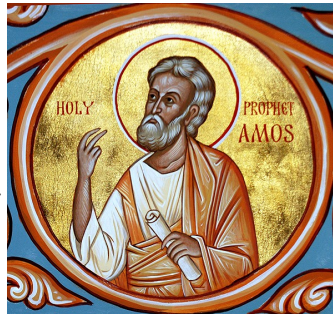
The prophet Amos has had four visions granted him by God concerning Israel. A swarm of locusts [see Amos 7:1], a drought [7:4], a measuring plumb-line [7:7], and a basket of fruit [8:1]. It is following these visions, that Amos speaks the words of God [Amos 8:4-10]. All four visions indicate that Israel has not been faithful to their relationship with God — the fruit in the basket is rotten and so is Israel in the eyes of the prophet. God means to punish Israel for not being fruitfully faithful.

Amos has been announcing their crooked ways, but the leaders of Israel have charged him not to speak any further. Of course, he has to because the Word is in him. Amos continues his denunciation of the unjust business practices of his times. When Amos had pleaded with God not to send pestilence upon the people, God had relented. But things have not improved. Amos now utters God's final warning; in it, Amos mimics their usual complaints: "When will the Sabbath be over, the celebration of the new moon so we can get back to work?" There are corners to be cut — the cheating to be extended.

Then Amos speaks for God; he reminds the people that God will remember every little cheating corner they have done. Amos is no longer going to try to argue God out of the divine plan as pictured in the visions, but he will not discontinue his prophetic warnings.

Luke's Gospel is also challenging of those who are greedy and centered on wealth [Luke 16:1-13]. The parable that Jesus tells needs some study for understanding. A trusted servant has betrayed his master and not dealt well with the master's property. He is summoned and his job is terminated. He reflects that his future looks bleak. So, he makes little deals with his master's clients in which he reduces significantly the amount that they owe the master. In this way he makes good friends with these clients who in turn will remember him in the days of need ahead. The master, upon finding out about this, commends the trickiness of the servant which he says is prudent.

Jesus finishes the parable and then says something seemingly a bit crooked too — he affirms that the sinful people of this generation are more prudent in their usual dealings, than are the "children of light." Then Jesus says that all should make friends with wealth, because it will fail in the long run and the resulting wisdom will lead to the eternal dwelling. Jesus closes with proverb-like sayings about those

**A PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING:**

Contrary to popular Christian belief, the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures weren't sent by God to predict the coming of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. The late Raymond Brown always reminded his students and readers: "There are no Old Testament predictions of Jesus as we know Jesus." Through the centuries we've given prophetic statements with meanings which the original prophets never intended to convey. If prophets simply predicted an event which would only take place hundreds of years down the road, why did so many of them die with their sandals on?

It's essential to see prophets as part of their day and age — not our day and age. They're the conscience of the people — reminding them of how God wants them to live their lives, constantly pointing out how they're living counter to God's plan. No one does this better than the prophet, Amos.

Active in 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE Israel, Amos does what all prophets do — he goes to the "good folk," showing how they're practicing a faith which isn't the Lord's faith. It's historically easy to practice a religion which at times actually leads people away from God's plan. If the prophet's audiences aren't at least outwardly committed to carrying out God's will, the prophet doesn't have much of an argument when he or she proclaims God's message.

That's why Amos delivers his oracles at the national shrine of Bethel — one of Israel's most sacred sanctuaries [Amos 8:4-10]. He's addressing people who think they're good Jews — individuals who among other things keep the religious regulations surrounding the new moon and the Sabbath. If they didn't, they wouldn't be at Bethel. But he points out that once these holy times are over those who so faithfully frequent the national shrine "trample on the needy and destroy the poor of the land." They use false weights when they sell their grain, and are willing to accept bribes — "a pair of sandals" — in their dealings with the poor and lowly. They go so far as to even sell "the refuse of the wheat" to those whose severe hunger forces them to buy it.

It's no accident that the Pauline disciple responsible for writing the letter to Timothy longs for followers of Jesus "to lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity" [1 Timothy 2:1-8]. We share his wish that people "should pray, lifting up holy hands, without anger or argument." All of us hope to live a peaceful existence. Yet the gospel Jesus teaches that because of the prophetic aspect of being other Christs, that isn't always possible.

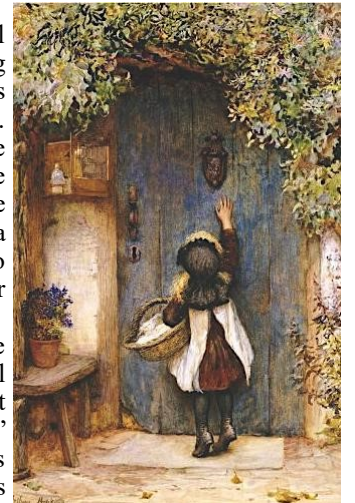
In Luke's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that carrying on his ministry doesn't happen by accident — it usually takes a lot of planning. He conveys that reality by pointing out the obvious — people work at doing evil much harder than they work at doing good. The unjust steward is ingenious in making certain his master's debtors "will welcome him into their homes" after he's been fired. Jesus demands his followers deliberately spend their lives giving themselves over to God, not to evil.

I've frequently suggested that we stop examining our conscience before we go to sleep at night, and begin to examine it when we get up in the morning. With the day in front of us, we can more easily figure out at what point we can squeeze in a good action for a friend, do an unrequested favor for someone, or simply be a loving person in a particular situation. It makes more sense to plot and connive good than just to instinctively do good when it comes to mind. Such precise planning could really make us prophetic Christians "dangerous" people in the world.

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

**PLANTING FLOWERS:**

"I want it to be said of me that I plucked a weed and planted a flower wherever I thought a flower would grow."



As an outsider, he had the “advantage” of clearly perceiving the injustices the locals tolerated because they had become an unimpeachable norm. Amos preached with poetic fire, reviling the privileged who maintained legality as they beat the poor into destitution [Amos 8:4-10].

Amos prepares us for Jesus’ story about the hacienda owner and his trickster CFO. In this tale, the boss, who apparently made his fortune lending out land in return for overpayment in produce, learns that his manager was less than devoted to increasing his master’s fortune. Jesus doesn’t say whether the manager was inept or dishonest, but the owner decided to call for an audit and send the guy packing [Luke 16:1-13].

That’s when the debt-collector-for-hire initiated a new, creative management strategy.

Both boss and steward knew that the tenant farmers’ debts would probably never be paid in full. A drought, floods, a plague of insects and other all-too-normal catastrophes regularly ruined sharecroppers’ chances of getting out of debt. Here’s where the manager proves that he’s smarter than the boss gave him credit for.

He calls in the people defaulting on their loans and offers them a discount in return for immediate payment. The genius of the situation is that the new payment is within the means of the debtors, it brings otherwise unobtainable income to the owner, and it puts the manager in good graces with both sides. It’s an ethically questionable situation of win-win and win!

Was Jesus accepting the trickery in light of the results? It rather seems so. First, explaining the manager’s activity, Jesus advises: “Make friends for yourselves with unrighteous money.” A few lines later, Jesus warns: “You cannot serve both God and money.” Jesus seems to be saying that money has questionable value in itself, but can and should be used to do some good.



In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis makes this same point. He looks to St. John Chrysostom — one of the Fathers of the Church who taught: “Not to share our wealth with the poor is to rob them and take away their livelihood. The riches we possess are not our own, but theirs as well.”

Pope Francis also cites St. Gregory the Great, who said: “When we provide the needy with their basic needs, we are giving them what belongs to them, not to us.” Some may call Chrysostom naive or a socialist. In his own day, he was exiled by the Empress Eudoxia who refused to tolerate his critiques of the lavish life of the clergy and court. Nevertheless, his ideas reflect Jesus’ own teaching and have been recontextualized in Catholic social teaching.

There’s no getting around it, as Luke moves toward the climax of his Gospel, his emphasis on reverence for the life and thriving of the poor only grows stronger. Luke’s Gospel, praising the wily manager, is a gentle introduction to what will be coming later.

Let us return to Francis. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, he wrote *Fratelli Tutti* as a reflection on the solidarity that humanity could have created when faced by our common vulnerability. Francis described the pre-COVID world as one that, perhaps like the hacienda owner, fed on dreams of grandeur and consumed distraction, insularity, and solitude.

Francis’ prescription for such a world goes to the heart of the wily manager’s methodology. He calls us to cultivate a shared passion and a community of belonging and solidarity “worthy of our time, energy and resources.” It’s that simple and that challenging.

Amos demonstrates how to look at reality with eyes that perceive how our societal norms grant excess to some, leaving others to languish. Is it not time to ask which of our social systems are truly worthy of the respect they are given in the law? When the unrighteous manager went around the law, might we say that he advanced a community of solidarity? Might Jesus just tell us: “Go and do likewise?”

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

who are faithful with the smaller things will be trusted with the larger and the opposite is true as well. These sayings, while true, are not as confusing as the larger portion of the reading for today.

Money — when it is not our master — can do great and wonderful things. The “children of light” are those who try to live toward the good — the Light. As children of the light we are invited to be prudent about what is important ultimately to us, whereas those who are of “this generation”, who like the unworthy servant, are prudent for what the world feels is “long term” security.

This is not an easy parable, but it does fit into Luke’s basic theme of living wisely with the gifts the Giver or Lord has given us. “Wisely” for Luke has to do more with our distribution of wealth than its accumulation. The steward was unwise in his use of the master’s wealth. He was wise, according to Jesus, by making friends with the master’s other clients by reducing their debts. A good question might be asked here: Did the steward cheat his master by this reduction, or did he reduce their debt by the exact amount his master was owing him? Whatever was going on, Jesus reflecting on the story reminds his followers to try to make life-long friends with wealth, because when they do, they will find out how short-lived that friendship really is.

Jesus knew well the lust for identity through wealth that was in the hearts of his followers. He is telling them and us to try to find peace and true life by avoiding to make money a permanent deity. The life that Jesus offers is but one of many forms, and we will have to try them and be disappointed by them. We will come to his ways and to him personally with many experiences of frustration, abandonment, and emptiness. We pay tribute to the Giver by our desire to distribute all that we have — including our gifted selves.

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

### BEING AN EFFECTIVE DISCIPLE:

The Gospel begins with Jesus telling his disciples a parable [Luke 16:1-13]. A rich man fires his steward for squandering his property. Too weak to do manual labor, and too ashamed to beg, the steward decides to make friends by reducing the amount debtors owe his master — on the hope that they will then welcome him into their homes. The master finds out about his scheme, but oddly, instead of throwing the dishonest steward in jail, he praises him for “acting prudently.” Jesus then explains: “For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.”

Scripture scholars are not agreed on how to interpret the parable, but one possibility is that it calls us to be wise, prudent and clever in becoming better disciples of Christ, and sharing more effectively in his mission to spread the kingdom in the world. We know the temptation to act imprudently — neglecting prayer; relying on God without cooperating with divine grace; expecting success without effort; failing to recognize the power of evil forces; making an idol out of wealth and power; thinking we can experience resurrection joy without taking up the cross; and hoping for peace without working for justice.

We can imagine individuals responding positively to the Gospel. An affluent retired doctor who was in the habit of giving a set amount to charitable requests, now investigates the administrative practices of the charities and gives more generously to those which use contributions efficiently. An aunt serving as a confirmation sponsor for her niece read some articles on the sacrament to prepare herself for conversations with her niece. An economics professor interested in reducing poverty in his community formed a group of colleagues to study the problem and to come up with a couple of concrete suggestions to present to city government. A religious sister struggling to become less judgmental and more tolerant found a wise spiritual director to help her with the problem.

How could you become a more effective disciple of Christ?

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



**THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL AWARENESS:**

Luke's Gospel is a part of a series of parables dealing with spiritual crises that are generated when we misuse our possessions — when we end up being possessed by our possessions [Luke 16:1-13]. Last weekend, Jesus told us the parable of the Prodigal Son who demanded his share of his father's estate and then went out and squandered it all [Luke 15:1-32]. Next weekend, Luke's Gospel will be all about the rich man eating a sumptuous meal at his table while poor Lazarus sat starving at his gate [Luke 16:19-38]. All of these put us in the context of "spiritual crises". So, let's turn to the devious and clever wicked steward who doctors the accounts of his master's books in order to win friends — friends who will care for him after he faces his impending firing.

We need to give attention to some background before we unpack the meaning of Jesus's parable while noting the number of instances when in His parables Jesus uses business practices so familiar to His listeners. In the parable of the talents, He used the investment of monies given to servants of a rich man to make His point [see Matthew 25]. The parable of the prodigal son involved the monetary inheritance the son would receive upon his father's death [see Luke 15]. Then there was the woman who searched for her lost coin [see Luke 15], the story of the merchant who sold everything in order to purchase the pearl of great value [see Matthew 13], the parables involving fishermen, farmers, lost sheep, and others, all of which involved the business practices of the people of those times.

Jesus' parable needs to be understood with the realization that it was against Jewish law to charge interest on loans of money. Instead of bankers, the Jews earned interest by lending out produce instead of money. Here in this particular case the rich man was probably an absentee landlord who loaned olive oil and wheat to his debtors expecting to receive more of each commodity in return than what he had loaned them — the difference being the equivalent of interest charges on his loans. It was understood that the master's steward would also earn his commission out of the differential amount — the amount between what was borrowed and the amount of the payback.

The religious understanding of the Pharisees was a very meticulous spiritual bookkeeping exercise. Everyone had to pray, pay, and obey. Anyone who didn't was considered to be a law-breaker and was cast out. Everything had its price, and everyone had their value in that spiritual economy. Jesus had a different understanding of our value in God's eyes.

What must have scandalized the Pharisees was the realization that the foresightful steward in the parable was being praised by Jesus precisely for his prudent vision of what lay ahead of him — not because he was a cheat but because he was a sinner who dared to hope for redemption.

Jesus is not commending the steward's dishonesty. The steward's dishonesty had been discovered and was obvious to everyone. Jesus didn't concern himself with the obvious. The prodigal son squandered his money, and the steward squandered his master's property. Both, however, took the necessary steps to secure their futures, just as did the characters presented in similar parables that Jesus used. What Jesus is concerned with is the lack of spiritual foresight on the part of His followers.

The point that Jesus is making is that we all ought to be as foresightful and prudent in planning ahead for our spiritual futures as the worldly-wise are in planning ahead for their financial and material futures. Jesus, clearly, is not commending the wicked steward for his deviousness. He was, after all, establishing a conspiracy to defraud the owner of the interest on his loans while at the same time returning the master's principal amount on his loans, making friends with his master's debtors, and securing his own future along the way. Jesus was presenting His followers with the example of the zealous fore-sightfulness of the wicked steward and wishing that His own followers would be at least as



When we are in touch with ourselves, we can relate to these words, these expressions of inadequacy. At the end of the day, we cannot measure up and cannot not disappoint others and ourselves. Generally, the fault is not that we are not sincere or that we do not put out the effort. The fault is that we are human. We have limited resources, we get tired, we experience feelings we cannot control, have only 24 hours in our day, have too many demands on us, have wounds and weaknesses that shackle us, and thus we know exactly what St. Paul meant when he said: "woe, to me, wretch that I am, the good I want to do, I cannot do; and the evil I want to avoid, I end up doing!" [Romans 7:19].

That may sound negative, neurotic, and stoic, and it can be those things, but, appropriated properly, it can generate hope and renewed energy in our lives. To be human is to be inadequate, by definition. Only God is adequate and the rest of us can safely say to ourselves: fear not you are inadequate! But a God who made us this way surely gives us the slack, the forgiveness, and the grace we need to work with such a state. Personally, I take consolation from the gospel parable of the ten bridesmaids who, while waiting for the bridegroom, all fell asleep, the wise and the foolish alike. Even the wise were too human and too weak to stay awake the whole time. Nobody does it perfectly and accepting this, our congenital inadequacy, can bring us to a healthy humility and perhaps even to a healthy humor about it.

But it should bring us to something more — prayer, especially the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is, among other things, a vigil of waiting. When Jesus instituted the Eucharist he told the disciples to keep celebrating it until he returned again. A biblical scholar, Gerhard Lofink, puts it this way: "the early apostolic communities cannot be understood outside of the matrix of intense expectation. They were communities imminently awaiting Christ's return. They gathered in Eucharist, among other reasons, to foster and sustain this awareness, namely, that they were living in wait, waiting for Christ to return."

I try to celebrate Eucharist every day. I do this because I am a priest and part of the covenant a priest makes with the church at his ordination is to pray the priestly prayer of Jesus, the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours, regularly for the world. But I do it too, more personally, for another reason: The older I get, the less confident, in some ways, I am becoming. I don't always know whether I'm following Christ properly or even know exactly what it means to follow Christ, and so I stake my faith on an invitation that Jesus left us on the night before he died: To break bread and drink wine in his memory and to trust that this, if all else is uncertain, is what we should be doing while we wait for him to return.

**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].

**AMOS' DOWN TO EARTH MESSAGE:**

Luke's Gospel reminds me of the movie *Waking Ned Devine*. It's a story about Irish villagers colluding to collect the lottery prize won by one of their neighbors who died of shock when he discovered that he had won. As in Jesus' stories, the goodness of less-than-honorable people outshines the moralistic virtue of the law abiders.

This touches on what Amos tells us today. Amos — a farmer/shepherd from the kingdom of Judah — was sent north to prophesy to Judah's rival, the kingdom of Israel. The unfortunate country-boy prophet was supposed to proclaim his message to rulers, clergy and wealthy urbanites.



but anyone who claims to be a Christian. Together there is much that we can do that we could not do alone. And even more important than that, we have Jesus as our head.

In a key meditation of his *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius asks the retreatant to imagine Christ, our King, calling all of us as a body, but also each one in particular, to follow him. He asks us to hear Jesus make this appeal: “It is my will to win over the whole world, to conquer sin, hatred, and death — all the enemies between the human race and God. Whoever wishes to join me in this mission must be willing to labor with me, so that by following me in suffering, he or she may follow me in glory.” And to that Ignatius adds this question: “With God inviting and with victory assured, how can anyone of right mind not give himself or herself over to Jesus and his work?”

Indeed, how can we not? —taken from the writings of Father Leo Murphy, S.J., 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, September 3]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-in]-----	\$ 1,160.00
Offerings-----[Sunday, September 4]-----	\$ 821.00
Offerings-----[Monday, September 5]-----[Labor Day]-----	\$ 70.00
Offerings-----[Saturday, September 10]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-in]-----	\$ 535.00
Offerings-----[Sunday, September 1]-----	\$ 391.00

### STRUGGLING WITH OUR OWN INADEQUACY:

It is hard to measure up. In our lucid moments we admit this. Rarely is there a day when we could not echo the following words by Anna Blaman: “I realized that it was simply impossible for a human being to be and remain good or pure. For instance, if I wanted to be attentive in one direction, it could only be at the cost of neglecting another. If I gave my heart to one thing, it left another in the cold. No day and no hour go by without my being guilty of inadequacy. We never do enough, and what we do is never well enough done, except being inadequate, which we are good at because that is the way we are made. This is true of me and of everyone else.

“Every day and every hour brings with it its weight of moral guilt, as regards my work and my relations with others. I am constantly catching myself out in my human failings and, in spite of their being implied in my human imperfection, I am conscious of a sort of check. And this means that my human shortcomings are also my human guilt. It sounds strange that we should be guilty where we can do nothing about it. But even where there is no set purpose, no deliberate intention, we have a conviction of our own shortcomings, and of consensual guilt, a guilt which shows itself all too clearly in the consequences of what we have done or left undone.”

Henri Nouwen occasionally expressed similar feelings: “There is a nagging sense that there are unfinished tasks, unfulfilled promises, unrealized proposals. There is always something else that we should have remembered, done or said. There are always people we did not speak to, write to, or visit. Thus, although we are very busy, we also have a lingering feeling of never really fulfilling our obligations. A gnawing sense of being unfulfilled underlies our filled lives.”

enterprising in caring for the future of their souls.

And so the immediate question confronting you and me is: How zealous are we in providing for our spiritual futures? Do we assume that God is a sort of Sugar Daddy in the Sky who is going to take care of us no matter what we do? Is it my unspoken assumption that what I do or what I don’t do in this life really doesn’t matter in the long run because a loving and infinitely merciful God will provide for me anyway? That insults God.

Many charitable and service organizations have Mission Statements. Most parishes have them. Successful businesses all have Business Plans. People who work in them — executives and worker alike — from time to time need to examine what they’re doing in the light of those plans and statements in order to keep focused and not devote their energies and divert them from their goals.

The world we live in is filled with distractions — distractions that come to us in all of our electronic devices both visual and aural. At times we get so busy that we wonder what we are accomplishing and where we are going. There are consequences that flow from our decisions and there are consequences that flow from our non-decisions and neglect. When you stop and think about it, not to decide is in itself a decision — a neglectful decision that can have bad consequences for us. This is particularly so when it comes to our spiritual lives.

So, what do you see in your own future, your own spiritual future? Can you accept that fact that you are a sinner — a sinner who can be much like the steward in Luke’s parable, a sinner who dares to hope, a prodigal son who returns home believing in his father’s love? It’s a question of faith. It’s a question of hope. It’s a question of love. What steps are we taking to provide for our spiritual futures?

So today let me suggest that time alone with God is essential if we are to spend eternity with God forever in heaven. We all have a destiny — a destiny God has given us. God didn’t give you and me a life to be lived only until we die. God gave us a life that He wants to share with us for all eternity — an eternal life to be lived in love, in a love relationship between you and Him.

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

### SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — OCTOBER 15<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.

### THERE’S A DIFFERENCE:

It is not how much we do, but how much love we put into what we do.

—Mother Teresa

**A QUESTION OF GENEROSITY:**

This is a peculiar parable. Why is it that we find Jesus at the end praising a dishonest person? What is there about the actions of the crooked steward that Jesus finds good and invites us to imitate? To answer this question, we have to be sure that we understand the parable correctly. The manager was certainly dishonest. He clearly squandered his master's property and was being fired because of it. But it is important that we understand correctly what his actions were, once his dishonesty had been found out. Normally we presume that when he brought in his master's debtors and reduced their bills that he was further cheating his master. But this is not the case. In the ancient world managers were given their income through commission. When the manager in the parable reduced the debtors' bills, he was not removing his master's profit, but his own. His hope was that by giving back to the debtors what was his own, they would recognize his shrewdness and generosity. Then, once he was fired, they might welcome him into their own financial operations. It was a risk to be sure. There was no guarantee that the debtors would respond in this way.

But what is noteworthy about this dishonest manager is that he had the insight to size up his situation and realize that the only possibility for future employment and security was to give away what he presently possessed. It is this insight and this action that Jesus commends and invites us to imitate. Because Jesus knows that if we correctly size up our present situation, we will realize that the only way to our future security is to give away some of what we possess today.

What is our present situation? Let me state this as clearly as I can. Everything we have is a gift — our life, our time, our relationships, our health, our money. Everything we have is a gift. This realization should certainly lead us to thankfulness. But thankfulness is not enough. Thankfulness must give way to generosity. For generosity is the sign of the kingdom of God. The person who understands God's kingdom understands that everything that we have been given has been given to us to share. Faithful stewardship requires giving back part of what we have been given.



Why is giving back so important? Two reasons: others need it and generosity is good for us. There is no doubt that others need the things that we possess. You cannot go more than two feet without running into one of the many needs that exist in our world. People need our time, our presence, our money. God loves all people. So, whenever anyone is hungry or sick or depressed God is counting on us and on our resources to help that person. Christians know this better than anyone else because the gospel tells us that whatever we fail to do for the least of our brothers or sisters we fail to do for Jesus. Therefore, refusing to give of what we have been given is a bad idea, a poor decision. Our relationship to God is connected to our generosity to others. We give because others are in need.

We also give because generosity is good for us. The deepest joy in life is giving out of love. Parents know this. Lovers know this. Sometimes we think that what is going to make us happy is to hold onto our time, to conserve our talents, to hoard our money. But this is not true. Joy comes from giving, giving freely and with love. The deepest moments of joy occur in the context of generosity.

Everything you have is a gift — a gift for which to be thankful and a gift to share. Holding onto the things we have been given will not make us happy. Giving what we have away will help others and give us the deepest joy.

So that is our present situation. That is how things stand. When the dishonest manager in the gospel saw how things stood, he did not hesitate. He swung into action. He started giving what he had

**FINDING GOOD NEWS:**

I don't know about you, but as I read our papers, watch the news on TV, or listen to the political commentators I tend to become more and more disheartened. I think it's only because I am by nature an optimist that I don't become completely discouraged. There are daily reports of innocent people being killed — whether in a school, or in some foreign country; there is a war going on in the Ukraine, and on the streets of our own country where people are being shot daily. We are in the midst of a contentious political campaign where, it seems that an inordinate amount of time has been spent by both sides trying to vilify the opposition to prove that their candidate is a better choice. Add to that a recent report that I read about cheating in our country's schools, executives of large corporations falsifying financial reports to put more money in their own pockets, prominent people cheating on their spouses, and the list just goes on and on and on.

Now I can just read your minds and see many of you thinking: "Why all this bad news when I come to Church. After all we come here to hear some good news. Isn't that what the Gospel is all about? Good news?" But if you listen very closely, more often than not, the Gospels sound like bad news!

My seemingly pessimistic reflections were actually occasioned by two of our Scripture Readings for this 25<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time — the first, from Amos, and then the Gospel passage from Luke.

Amos has been called the prophet of social justice because he is always calling attention to injustices in his society, particularly the treatment of the poor. And today it's about cheating. He castigates merchants who fix scales and devalue money so the poor will have to pay more than the goods they are buying are worth. He is fierce in his denunciation of such tactics, and what he says does not sound too different from the examples I listed above. He winds up saying: "The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: never will I forget a thing they have done" [Amos 8:4-10] — a statement that seems to foresee dire things for people who grow rich on the backs of the poor.

Then in the Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells a story about someone who cheats. A steward has been growing rich by mishandling his employer's property. Sounds pretty contemporary. But when he is found out and threatened with punishment, he is very wily in finding ways to assure his security for the future. Surprisingly when the employer returns to settle matters and finds how clever he has been in dealing with the debtors, he praises him, and so, it seems, does Jesus. This, of course, raises all kinds of problems for us who read it today as perhaps it did when Luke wrote his Gospel. Is the employer and is Jesus praising this man for his dishonesty? That could hardly be the case. Indeed, to prevent misunderstanding Jesus says: "The children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light" [Luke 16:1-13].

Jesus is using the story then not to tell us to imitate the steward in his dishonesty, but in his prudence and cleverness in taking care of himself. We, however, should do it, not for purely material gain, but to do our part in furthering the Kingdom of heaven.

We have been hearing some very challenging things from Jesus these past several weeks as we follow him on his journey to Jerusalem and to the Cross. Two weeks ago he told the crowds who were traveling with him — and he told us as well — that nothing less than complete commitment on our part will satisfy him. And he warned them — and us — that we should know what we are getting into if we accept the challenge.

I am sure that it was not easy to be a committed follower of Jesus in the first century when Luke wrote his Gospel. And it certainly is no easier today. Christian commitment means trying to change the world, and when we consider all those crises that we face today — and think of others that we could all add to them — our temptation is to throw up our hands and say: "What's the use? What can I do to try to change things?"

Well, it's true. Alone we are pretty helpless. But the good news that I promised is that we are not alone. We are not simply individuals trying to accomplish the impossible. First of all, we are members of the Body of Christ. We have one another, we have all those who profess, not only the Catholic Faith,



**USING OUR INGENUITY FOR THE LORD:**

Luke's gospel [16:1-13] reminds me of a story I read about an enterprising soldier. A young man joined the Israeli army and, after his training, he was assigned to a tank division near the Israeli-Syria border. He had only been working for one week when he went to his commanding officer and asked for a leave. The commanding officer started laughing and then said to him: "You want a leave? You just got here. OK, I'll give you a leave, but on one condition — you have to capture a Syrian tank." "No problem," said the young man. Later on that afternoon, a Syrian tank waiving a white flag pulled into the Israeli camp. The young Israeli soldier got out. The commanding soldier said: "The leave is yours. But how did you get this tank?" "Simple," said the soldier. "I drove to the DMZ in one of our tanks. saw a Syrian soldier on one of his tanks. I asked him if he wanted a weekend pass. He said: 'Sure.' So we switched tanks."

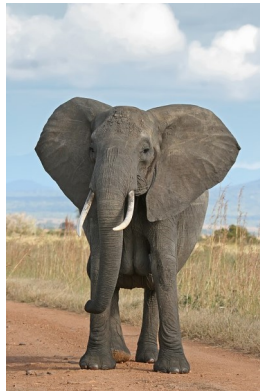
I heard another story recently about two salesmen — Harry and Al. Harry saw Al walking down the street and said to him: "Al, I have a great deal for you. A real bargain! An elephant. A whole elephant. Yours for only \$500." Al said: "Are you crazy? What am I going to do with an elephant?" "Al," said Harry, "this is a magnificent beast — all gray. Complete with a working trunk." Then Harry said: "But I have no place to keep an elephant. I live in a small three room apartment." "Al," said Harry, "did I tell you about the tusks? Two three foot long tusks. This is a beautiful animal. They don't make them like this anymore." At this Al went wild and started screaming: "Look I live on the third floor. I couldn't feed the elephant. I don't even want an elephant." "You're a hard man, Al" said Harry; "OK, I'll throw in a second whole elephant for only a hundred bucks extra." And then Al said: "Harry, now you're talking."

It is amazing how astute we can be when making business deals. Whether it's buying a used car or selling a house — all of us learn how to get the most for our money. This is not something new — it's part of human nature to get the best deal possible. Jesus was aware of this. The parable he told about the steward who had to think quick to get himself out of a financial jam recognized human ingenuity. The Lord's point is that we often demonstrate our intelligence, but we don't apply this intelligence to the one thing that really matters — our eternal salvation. Consider the number of times that we've sat down and worked out how we can use our talents to be better Christians.

Consider the number of times we've thought out how we can put ourselves in situations which would avoid moral problems that we've had in the past. Consider the number of times that we've plotted out how we can implant the practice of our faith in our families. If we were to add up the minutes spent a month doing this and compare them to the minutes a month spent working out our financial deals, would there be any comparison at all? Christ tells us: "You have the intelligence, use it. Use it to fulfill the mission you assumed when I called you to be my disciples. We must be as resourceful and dedicated in the ways of God as we are in the ways of commerce and politics.

Jesus' parable challenges us to be as eager and ingenious for the sake of God's reign — to be as ready to use our time and money to accomplish great things for the Gospels as we are to secure our own happiness. Some people — like the people of Amos' time — have perfected how they can out-smart others [Amos 8:4-10]. They cheat with their scales. They inflate money. That is not why God gave us intelligence. He gave us intelligence to make his presence real in the world. The cleverness, skill and plain nerve that the manager used to save his skin — and that the soldier used to secure a weekend pass, and that Al used to get a good deal from Harry — we must use to make God's ways real in our world. Today we ask the Lord to help us to our ingenuity to promote His Kingdom.

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



away. We are called to follow his example. This week you will be given time, the opportunity to use your talents, and money. You could choose to hold onto all of these things and use them only for yourself, but that would be a bad idea, a poor investment. Luke's gospel poses a wiser and more helpful question. It asks us: "This week, how much of your time and your talent and your money are you willing to give away?" [Luke 16:1-13]. —taken from the writings of Father George Smiga, which appear on the internet

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

**Monday:** Proverbs 3:27-34, Luke 8:16-18

**Tuesday:** Proverbs 21:1-13, Luke 8:19-21

**Wednesday:** Ephesians 4:1-13, Matthew 9:9-13

**Thursday:** Ecclesiastes 1:2-11, Luke 9:7-9

**Friday:** Ecclesiastes 3:1-11, Luke 9:18-22

**Saturday:** Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:8, Luke 9:43-45

**26<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time:** Amos 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 6:11-16, Luke 16:19-31

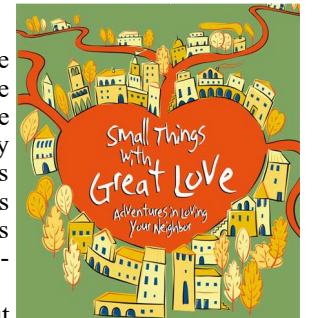
**SMALL THINGS WITH GREAT LOVE:**

Back in 2016, Pope Francis told the young people at World Youth Day: "The times we live in do not call for young 'couch potatoes', but for young people with shoes — or better, boots — laced." Instead of "couch potatoes," the Pope said, we must become "protagonists of history." Otherwise we simply surrender to those who have agendas contrary to the Gospel. This process begins with something that St. Teresa of Calcutta taught — do small things with great love. As Jesus says in Luke's Gospel: "the person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones" [Luke 16:1-13].

Let's start with something small — something we often overlook — but that can have enormous importance. St. Paul tells us to "pray for those in authority — that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity" [1 Timothy 2:1-8]. This prayer anyone can readily incorporate into their life of prayer. After you have thanked God for his gifts — including the gift of belong to this country — pray for President Biden. You don't have to agree with him or like everything he is doing. St. Paul was hardly enthusiastic about the Roman Emperor who was persecuting Christians, but he prayed for him and all those in authority. Like St. Paul, we are little people. But also like him, we hold the key for transforming society. In the Gospel we see a man with limited options. He has disgraced himself and he faces banishment. The man does not run away or crawl into a hole. Rather, he considers his options and does what he can to help others. Jesus praises him [Luke 16:1-13]. So this is the key, this how a person laces his boots — whatever you have done, whatever your limitations, trust Jesus and help others.

Do small things with great love. As Jesus says: "The person who is trustworthy in small matters is also trustworthy in great ones." Resolve not to be a couch potato, but to have boots laced. Even though we are little people who trust Jesus and pray for those with vast responsibility. We are little people who hold the key to transforming our society. Do small things with great love.

—taken from the writings of Father Phil Bloom, which appear on the internet. 9



**THE LIE OF SELF-RELIANCE:**

As a high school student, I can remember carrying a stack of textbooks, barely able to hold their weight. A classmate noticed my apparent struggle and asked if they could assist. I responded with a sharp, “No, I got it!” A few years later, as a young adult, I was on a mission trip to Jamaica. One day we moved forty-pound cement blocks for nearly two hours without rest or even a break for water. Another volunteer noticed my fatigue and asked if they could sub in for me. My response? You guessed it: “No, I’m fine!”

I can do it on my own; I don’t need anyone; I can’t trust anyone; I can only trust myself. Have you ever said anything like this? Or, have you ever believed that you could make it through this life on your own? We live in a time where being independent — totally independent — is a sought-after quality. Don’t get me wrong; independence is not a bad thing. It becomes a problem when we believe we can do everything ourselves. The problem? It can shove others out, most notably Jesus.

In St. John’s Gospel, Jesus said: “Without me, you can do nothing” [John 15:5]. The truth is we cannot do everything ourselves, and we were not made to do everything ourselves. Sometimes we need to go back to the basics. We already have a Savior, and His name is Jesus — not you or me. We have a God who chooses us, desires us, loves us, and wants to be in a relationship with us. Countless stories in Scripture illustrate people who needed a Savior. We are all in need of a Savior. Identifying the trap of “I can do everything on my own” or “I don’t need anybody” is crucial to a life of freedom. Here are some important reminders for us to better recognize our self-reliance.



**The devil doesn’t want us to find this lie.** Through many experiences in life, usually those associated with pain cause us to adopt the mindset that “I can only depend on myself.” Then once we do, bang! The devil pounces and does not relent. The author and father of lies [see John 8:44] will do everything he can to prevent us from untangling this lie in our life and lure us away from the truth. He wants us to believe that we are alone, that we carry burdens alone, and that we don’t have or need anyone. How do we fight this? We must stay grounded in the reality that we did not make ourselves. We came to exist through others and, ultimately, another. We need others. We need Jesus. What is the source of your self-reliance? What lie have you believed?

**We are made for community.** You and I are hardwired for relationships. One of the downsides of self-reliance is that you don’t let other people help you. This can lead to you being overwhelmed or making others feel bad — unintentionally — because they feel like you are not open to inviting them into your life. It is not bad if we can complete a task independently; the bad thing is when we refuse to let others help — especially when you can really use the help. The importance of embracing vulnerability is crucial to connecting in community. Sometimes, self-reliance can rob us of authentic and true friendship that we desire and need. Without vulnerability, relationships struggle. It is ok not to have it together and share our struggles with trusted peers. Vulnerability is a key to connection because it is the courage to be open to others. When we are brave enough to be ourselves, we permit others to do the same. Has a past relationship closed you off to others and made you self-reliant? Do you fear rejection if people see your brokenness?

**Total Surrender.** St. Faustina says: “Oh, how good it is to abandon oneself totally to God and to give Him full freedom to act in one’s soul!” Easier said than done, right? A common tendency amongst individuals is to rely on themselves when the current of life is smooth, and we do not seem to need anybody. Then, when something arises in life that we cannot control, such as trying out for a sports team, awaiting acceptance into college, or something life-threatening like a friend or family member getting

cancer, we beg of Jesus to hear our wants and desires. Recognizing when we are falling into the “I can do everything myself mode” will help us lean into and build a trusting relationship with God. Even when the current of life is uninterrupted, we always need total surrender and reliance on Jesus. Do you pray for an increase in trust with God?

We can’t do everything is a true statement. And how relieving and freeing it is knowing we are not made to do everything on our own. We have a Father in Heaven who rejoices over being with us on our journey. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him” [Ephesians 1:3-5]. —taken from the writings of Kelly Colangelo, a young adult

**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].**

**WHERE WERE YOU BORN?**

I would imagine all of us have been asked that question. But for my purpose here, the answer to that question will tell us a lot about not only ourselves, but also the world. Many of our parents or grandparents were immigrants. My dad was brought from Holland by my grandmother, who traveled with three boys. For those of us born in the United States, I suspect we are grateful to be citizens. No nation ever was or will be perfect. And I doubt anyone born here would want to give up his or her citizenship and move elsewhere. We are grateful, yes, but the simple fact is that we are here because of circumstances over which we had no say. Of course, none of us would regret the choices others made so that we could be born and live in “the land of the free and the home of the brave.”

But sometimes we can take these circumstances for granted — almost as if we deserve them. And from our point of view, we can look around the world and realize how many millions of people have not a tenth of what we have. And yet, without realizing it, we can judge others and make them entirely responsible for the circumstances they find themselves in — circumstances they had no choice over. And that would be very unfair on our part.

There are two important truths that we must never forget: [1] every human being is loved by God; and [2] Jesus died for every human person — no matter where or when he or she lived life on earth.

Today we see terrorists murdering innocent people. We are outraged and horrified by these acts. But we must consider what it would be like if we were born in countries such as Syria or Iraq. We would have an entirely different worldview. There is a saying that we know is true: “As the twig is bent, so the tree is inclined.” Terrorists, after all, are not born that way — they become that way. Then I think about my own life. I have been privileged to make so many free choices in a healthy, loving environment. When I look around the world, I wonder how many had the opportunity to make decent, moral choices.

I make this point not to say evil is good — which can never be said. We rightly condemn evil in the world. But perhaps we should remind ourselves of how privileged we are in our circumstances and how we need to be aware of judging another human being for doing terrible and unthinkable acts.

God has boundless mercy for us all.

—taken from the writings Father Jim Van Vurst, O.F.M., which appear on the internet