

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer for Waiting ~

**Patient God
sometimes I forget
that you wait for me.**

**You wait for me
to finish wrapping
and decorating.
You wait for me
to finish baking
and shopping.
You wait for me
to finish my busy schedule,
my time with friends,
my outside interests.**

**Help me
to give you
more than my wiped-out self
at the end of the day.
Help me
to participate fully
in the birth of Jesus
in my heart.
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.

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION:

Thursday, **December 8th**, is the Feast of the **Immaculate Conception of Mary**. It is a **holy day of obligation**. This is an important feast day because Mary, under the title of her Immaculate Conception, is the **patroness of the United States**. **This Feast is also at the heart of the Advent Season**. We will have a **Vigil Mass on Wednesday, December 7th at 5:30 PM**. We will also have 3 Masses on **Thursday, December 8th**: **8:00 AM** [Upper School — **not open to the public** because of lack of extra seating]; **9:30 AM** [Lower School]; and **2:00 PM** [Middle School]. **Please note: there will be NO 5:30 PM Mass on Thursday**. All Masses will take place in the chapel. We have much to pray for in our nation at this time. Please mark your calendars so that you will be able to join us for Mass on this important Feast Day.

**ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE:**

On **Thursday, December 15th at 7:00 PM**, we will celebrate our **Advent Communal Penance Service**. This service will consist of scriptural reflections by those involved in the Christmas Story. There will also be songs and hymns, and a time to straighten the paths of our lives to ease the arrival of our God. Each of us needs to truly hear in our heart the message of John the Baptist: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand” [see Mark 1:15]. The service will last about 45 minutes. There will be an opportunity for individual reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation following the service. Please join

**SCHEDULE OF ADVENT/CHRISTMAS SERVICES:**

- **Thursday, December 15 — Communal Penance Service at 7:00 PM**
- **Sunday, December 20 — Decoration of the Chapel for Christmas** following the 10 AM Mass
- **Saturday, December 24 — 4:00 PM — Christmas Eve Mass**
- **Sunday, December 25 — Christmas Day Mass at 10:00 AM**
- **Saturday, December 31 — New Year’s Eve Mass at 5:00 PM**
- **Sunday, January 1 — Sunday Family Mass at 10:00 AM**

OLC “ADOPT A FAMILY” PROGRAM:

For many years, Our Lady Chapel community has worked with St. Adalbert Parish in adopting families to help them celebrate the Christmas Season. In recent years, we have had many requests from our families to begin this project earlier in order to take advantage of pre-Christmas sales, etc. We are collecting the names of families from St. Adalbert at the present time. **The need is greater than ever**. St. Adalbert identifies families — most often single parent, below poverty level families; we are given the grade levels of the children & other family information, so that you can purchase gifts appropriate to each member.



As we did last year, we will be procuring gift cards from various places, and the families will be purchasing the gifts for their families. This worked very well for everyone. Those from our chapel family who participated in this project last year spoke very highly of the benefit of this project to their own families. Even our Life Teen and EDGE Groups have adopted families and gone shopping together on a Sunday afternoon. This is a project that the entire family can get involved in. Families can be matched according to family size, ages, etc. It was truly inspiring. **Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560 or szaniszlop@gilmour.org]. The lists are in the chapel office now. “Adopt-a-Family” gifts need to be returned by Sunday, December 18th.**

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For a person who is struggling with mental health issues.
- For Ethel Nagy, mother of Lazlo Nagy, grandmother of Rich [*16] and Josh Nagy., who is seriously ill.
- For Amy Boyle, Gilmour Communications Associate, mother of Molly [*21] and Maddy [*23] Boyle, who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For Carol Lowen, mother of Denise Shade, grandmother of Madeline, Michael, and Charles Shade, who is undergoing treatment for Breast Cancer.
- For Kim Clark, who is undergoing treatment for an aggressive form of cancer.
- For Beverly Jacklitch, mother of Kitchen Associate, Susan Jacklitch, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Barbara Clark, mother of Fine and Performing Arts Program Coordinator. Lucas Clark, who is hospitalized
- For Niles Powell, who is undergoing treatment following a heart attack.
- For Paula Smith, mother of Tyler [*10] and Alec [*13] Smith, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jacqueline Schmidt, [*13], Lower School toddler instructor, who is recovering from foot surgery.

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Brother Jerome Kroetsch, C.S.C.
- For Ralph Haag, Sr., father of Father Ralph Haag, C.S.C.
- For Cindy Patrick
- For Chris Geschke
- For David Mattis, husband of former Middle School Director, Paula Mattis, father of Kim [*89] and Bill [*91] Mattis
- For Martin Lavelle, nephew of Head of School Emeritus, Brother Robert Lavelle, C.S.C.
- For Sister Ruth Barbara Holtshouser, C.S.C.
- For Hubert and June Malicote, great-uncle and aunt of Upper School Instructor, Matt Lindley [*89], and Ben [*24], Nathan [*26] and Evan [*27] Lindley
- For Mike Lamonica.
- For Sister Georgia Costin, C.S.C.
- For Mary Goers.
- For Blanche Haag, mother of Former Lower School Director, Marc Haag, and mother-in-law of former Religion Instructor, Rita Haag.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

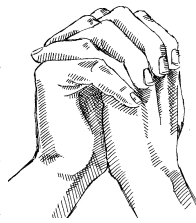
- For the Holy Cross Religious in Haiti, and for the people of that country, which is under siege because of political and civil strife.
- For a family going through a difficult time.
- For an end to violence and racial injustice in our society.
- For an end to sexual abuse and lack of respect for human 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.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Lyle Schulte, who is recovering from Lung Transplant surgery.
- For Toni Gjonaj, sister-in-law of Marketing Associate, Mary Stretar, who is recovering from a stroke.
- For Baylea O'Brian, friend of former Gilmour Teacher, Erin Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for Hodgkins Lymphoma
- For Fred Miller, uncle of Jessica Hammer Debick ['09], and brother in law of Pete Hammer ['78], who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Brother Thomas Moser, C.S.C., who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Lincoln Rhode, 6 year old son of Matthew Rhode ['96], grandson of Ray ['51] and Noreen Rhode, nephew of Patrick ['88] and Chris ['93] Rhode, who is undergoing continued treatment for a stroke
- For Walter Carey, who is undergoing treatment for leukemia.
- For Pat Malak, who is seriously ill.
- For Carol Triplett, sister of Linda McGraw, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- 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 Madeleine Popp, mother of Gilmour CFO, Kathy Popp, who is ill.
- For Marina McCarter, grandmother of Aaron ['25] and Mason ['28] McCarter, who is ill
- 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 Matthew Gebhart, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For John Roddy, brother of Tim Roddy ['87], 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 Fletcher Linsz, brother of Logan Linsz ['26], who is undergoing treatment for Hodgkin Lymphoma.
- For Michael Nestor ['98], who is undergoing treatment for a rare form of cancer.
- For Joseph Borkey ['82], brother of Jeff ['80] and Jerrod ['87] Borkey, father of Christian Borkey ['16], and uncle of Jerrod ['12] and former Gilmour student, Ian Borkey, who is undergoing treatment for cancer
- For 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.



FAITH EDUCATION:

Faith Education meets next Sunday [December 11th] and then again on Sunday, December 18th at 8:45 AM. There will be no class on Sunday December 25th or January 1st due to Christmas Break. 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.



SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, December 4: 2 nd Week in Advent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, December 5:	Check with Office for time
Tuesday, December 6: St. Nicholas	Check with Office for time
Wednesday, December 7: Vigil of the Immaculate Conception	5:30 PM In Person
Thursday, December 8: The Immaculate Conception	8:00 AM [only GA upper School] 9:30 AM 2:00 PM
Friday, December 9:	Check with Office for time
Saturday, December 10: 3 rd Week in Advent	5:00 PM In Person
Sunday, December 11: 3 rd Week in Advent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

THE GIVING TREE:

Our annual Giving Tree can be found in the narthex of the chapel. Next to the tree is an easel containing gifts for you to obtain. Choose whatever gift you would like, and then bring it back and put it under the tree. Gifts do not have to be wrapped....just label the package or bag with the gift you are giving. **Here is the Gift List:**

For St. Adalbert School: Children's Socks, Youth Size 1-3 or 4-6; Young ladies Socks Size 9-11; Young men's Socks Size 11-13; Gloves for all ages, Grades K—8.

For Regent of Euclid Assisted Living: MEN: Slippers, Body Wash, Sweaters. WOMEN: Slippers, Body Wash, Sweaters, Fragrance Gifts, Scarves. FOR BOTH: Mugs, Fleece Throw Blankets.

For the Fatima Family Center: Fatima has given us a list of individual children, with clothing sizes and a specific gift request. Please see the list posted beside the Tree, or contact the Chapel Office to "Adopt" one of these children.

All items need to be at the chapel before Monday, December 12th. Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560] if you have any questions.



A REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK’S THEME:

During this time of the year, every television commercial, every department store, and even most of our conversations focus our attention on Christmas plans. We begin to turn our attention to whom to invite over for dinner and what gifts to give family and friends. For some, Christmas represents loneliness, loss, and unbearable anxiety. For them, Advent becomes a painful waiting period before the reopening of a wound, and a reminder of their aloneness in this world. Sometimes we forget to stay in the moment of Advent a bit longer and more intentionally — even though it might seem easier to just look ahead.

For the reality is that there is something blowing in the wind. The breath of God is announcing a coming event which is to rearrange or “un-disarrange” what has become “usual”. It is a time in nature when the sun’s movements change how we look at things. We may have gotten accustomed to the warmth of summer and fall; but now we face the darkness and cold of winter. As we enter into the wind or breath of change during these Advent days, let us pray that we are moved by the Spirit of God to keep growing, changing, advancing and becoming more of what God originally created us all to be. The way things currently are in us and in our world do not have to be as angular, or hostile, or alienating as they are presently. Advent invites us to let the Breath of God soften us — while, at the same time, emboldening us. The process begins with our answering the basic question — is the coming of Jesus is a basic comfort or discomfort — or even more importantly, do we even care?

A very familiar and heart-warming passage from the prophet Isaiah begins our Scripture Readings for this 2nd Week in Advent [Isaiah 11:1-10]. Isaiah begins with the reminder that the Messiah will come from the Davidic family tree or bush — He will spring from the royal root of God’s chosen leading family. He shall be surrounded by the spirit which embraced the traditional religious leaders of Jewish history. He will have the wisdom of his ancestors Solomon and David. He will have the “fear of the Lord” which allowed Moses to trust God. In truth the Messiah will fit into the well-known pattern of the great leaders of Israel’s past.

This new and longed-for blessed Messiah will have the spirit of the Judges of Jewish history, but will judge more by God’s spirit than mere human evidence. He will be dressed in the clothing of Justice, faithfulness, and sensitivity for the poor.

But in the midst of this comfort, Isaiah paints his famous picture — this Messiah will reverse the accustomed ways in the animal world. Natural enemies will no longer fear their natural rivals. Eden’s curse of hostility and fear will be dissolved. The “little child” and the “baby” will join in familial interchange with the animals because of their innocence. This rearranging of the old will take place in the “glorious” dwelling offered to the earth by its Creator. The dwelling will be the universal embrace of the Messiah offered to the Jews and through them to all others known as the “gentiles.” The usual dwelling of shame and guilt resulting from the fracturing in the Garden of Eden will be refashioned, replanted, reoffered in the bestowing of innocence once more through the same breath/spirit which once gardened the earth.

The drama of Matthew’s Gospel [3:1-12] is intense. John the Baptist comes on stage. He prompts us to live Advent in a deeper way. John the Baptist, a man who lived what he preached, did not hold back when he informed everyone present for baptism that their task was to announce Christ by the way they lived; it was not enough to say that they were baptized. It is clear that his role is to begin rearranging the religious scenery. The scribes and Pharisees soon join him representing the old accustomed religious furniture. While many of those who have been listening to John’s call to recover their faith traditions and are being baptized, John has hard words for the pretenders.

**PREPARING FOR THE LORD WHO IS ALREADY HERE:**

We need to pay attention to Isaiah’s statement that says: “for as waters cover the sea, so will the earth be filled with the knowledge of our God” [Isaiah 11:1-10]. The key to appreciating the importance of this statement revolves around being aware of the ancient Hebrew meaning of the words: “knowledge” or “know.” Our biblical authors normally employ “know” or “knowledge” when they’re talking about a person actually experiencing someone or something. It implies a far deeper relationship than just having a casual familiarity with persons or things — like I know the times tables, or I know him when I see him. When the word is biblically used in the context of men and women knowing one another — as in “Adam knew his wife Eve” [see Genesis 4] or in Luke’s annunciation scene [see Luke 1:26-38] — “How can this be since I do not know man?” — it usually implies sexual intimacy.

So, when the prophet speaks about the earth being filled with the knowledge of God, he is basically sharing his conviction that all of us one day will experience God’s presence in everything and everyone we encounter. God will be as much a part of us as water is a part of the sea. For those who have that God-experience everything will change; even natural enemies will become friends.

Yet at this point in salvation history — 8th century BCE — Isaiah is still locked into the Jewish monarchy. He believes that it is through one of the country’s kings that the Lord’s presence eventually will become an everyday experience. That’s why he spends so much time enumerating the gifts such a unique sprout from the stump of Jesse will possess. By the way, it’s from this passage that we get six of the seven gifts of the Spirit we had to memorize in our Confirmation classes. When Paul lists his gifts of the Holy Spirit, he got them from here [see Galatians 5].

By the time Jesus of Nazareth was about to begin his public ministry, most Jews had given up on one particular king creating an ideal God-present age. A few centuries before this itinerant preacher shuttered his Capernaum carpenter shop, they started to believe that God was going to step outside the reigning monarchy and send a special “Messiah” who would usher in this longed-for day and age. That’s why Matthew’s John the Baptizer is forced to set people straight — emphatically informing them that he is not that special person — he’s just preparing the way for him [see John 1:20-21].

But even if we believe that Jesus is the Messiah, we can never forget John’s basic “stump speech.” John is not going to bring about God’s presence, he’s simply announcing that God is already present. Remember the first words of Jesus’ public ministry: “The kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe in the good news!” [see Mark 1]. In other words: “Why are you still waiting for something that’s already here? You simply have to change your value system and you’ll notice God working effectively in your everyday lives!”

Our earliest Christian writer, Paul, presumes his readers in Rome have already gone through such a value changing repentance [Romans 15:4-9]. The eyes through which they filter everything happening around them constantly surface God’s presence and actions. That’s why, as Isaiah prophesied, they can experience the unity between people who traditionally were opposed to one another — especially the oneness between Gentiles and Jews. Jesus’ ministry of helping people recognize God working in all people has made it possible to experience God in all people, even in natural enemies.

Often — especially during Advent — it seems that we’re still passively expecting God to enter our lives — instead of being committed to living the way Jesus of Nazareth thought necessary to recognize that God is already here. Perhaps a change in our value system is simply too much to expect.

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

THE WORD OF GOD:

Every word of God is spirit and life. When you receive and obey the word of God, the power of God works in you.

—TB Joshua



METANOIA:

“The kingdom of heaven is at hand!” “In that great getting’ up morning, fare thee well, fare thee well.” John the Baptist proclaimed the first of these statements [see Matthew 3:1-12]; the second is from a traditional spiritual. Both refer to the coming of God’s chosen redeemer-judge. In third grade, when I learned that the final judgment would reveal all our sins, I agonized over the fact that my teacher would know that I had whispered that I hated her. With images like John’s winnowing fan and unquenchable fire, preaching about Christ’s second coming is generally designed to inspire fear and repentance. I had gotten the message.

The spiritual — “In That Great Getting’ Up Morning” — celebrates a joyous alternative to God’s impending wrath. Perhaps because it springs from the heart of people who had been treated unjustly, the song proclaims judgment day as a day of jubilation.

For the singers, Isaiah’s shout of, “On that day!” [see Isaiah 11:1-10] refers to the “great, great getting’ up morning,” when God will tell Gabriel to blow the horn loud enough to awaken the nations, but not to frighten God’s people. The words, melody, and rhythm of the song harmonize in a proclamation that God’s people will rejoice on the day of judgment. The contrast in images between a day of wrath and that “getting’ up morning” invites us to think anew about the coming of God’s reign and to let renewing images inspire us.

Isaiah unites images of past and future to inspire our present moment. He envisions the advent of a redeemer whose ancestral roots include the pagan widow Ruth, her son Jesse, and her grandson, King David [See the Book of Ruth; also see 1 Samuel 16.] Isaiah says that God’s envoy will perceive what lies deep behind every facade or humiliation. He will rectify injustice, unveiling the depths of each person. Tenderly loving the afflicted, the savior will call the wicked to account.

Isaiah wants to inspire dreams. He wants us to envision universal peace: a time when all creatures — from widow to queen, from lion to lamb — will have evolved beyond aggression because we enjoy and share everything necessary for genuine thriving. That’s what life will be like on God’s holy mountain.

The question is: “how do we get there?” Enter John the Baptist. Before we dwell on Isaiah’s mountain, John draws us into the desert. John’s desert isn’t primarily a place of fear or want. In Israel’s collective memory, the desert was an in-between space — a time and place of growth. While in that desert, they accused God and Moses of leading them out to die of thirst. They complained about missing the good food of Egypt. They spent some time practicing idolatry and they trembled at the signs of God’s presence. Gradually, the former slaves became a people of God. In the austere and strangely fertile setting of the desert — a locale matched to his clothing and diet — John summoned his people to metanoia.

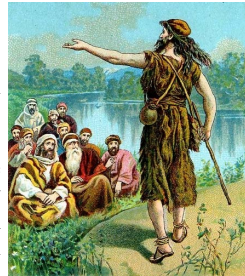
Metanoia — “repentance” — is quite distinct from being sorry and making a firm purpose of amendment. Metanoia is an exciting, life-giving shakeup and shift of outlook. John summoned his people to metanoia, not because they are sinners, but because the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Sorrowful repentance and metanoia propose quite different approaches to change. Repentance concentrates on self — myself as perpetrator and my offense. Metanoia is a response to an invitation that focuses on God’s promise that something new is in the offing. It is an invitation to a conversion of mindset. It is so radical that we don’t seem to have an English word capable of communicating it. Nevertheless, practicing it will change our lives.

John preached a message about God’s future. He called it the kingdom of heaven; Isaiah described it as life on God’s holy mountain. In his letter to the Romans, Paul spoke of it as the internal and collective harmony that flows from life in Christ Jesus.

John summarized his message with the proclamation: “Prepare the way of the Lord” [Matthew 3:1-12]. He heralded something new. He did not belittle the temple and synagogue, but warned his audiences that membership in a religious tradition made them no holier than pavement stones. For John, belief necessarily included the zest for life that comes from the fire of the Holy Spirit.

John tells us to prepare — to ready ourselves for the coming of God’s reign. Isaiah tells us that “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord” [Isaiah 1:1-10]. Now is the time to envision what that can mean and to begin to act as if it were true. Now is the time to allow that great, “great getting’ up morning” to inhabit our imagination and inspire our activities. Let us prepare the way of the Lord!

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



The Pharisees are religious observers — and this is meant in two ways. Mainly, they observe how others are keeping clean by keeping externally conforming to the teachings of the same Pharisees. John’s words to them are directed not so much to their coming out into the desert to be baptized, but that he knows the cleansing waters will be only a skin-deep observance. What John is announcing is that the ax is being laid against the roots of unfruitful religious observance. He is calling out for a baptism leading to the works of original innocence. He proclaims that one is coming who will gather the true fruit of his garden, and the unfruitful will be burned away. The scribes and Pharisees know well that John is denouncing religious “spectators” and calling for true participation in the recovery of God’s bountiful garden.

It is three weeks before Christmas and decorations are beginning to appear. Time is growing short to get everything accomplished. We have become too complacent and overly comfortable with the flow of the Church calendar. Preparing our heart to be a welcoming place for Jesus becomes an afterthought in the rushing around.

Advent can also be a challenge because it feels like just another period of waiting. We find ourselves tired of preparing ourselves to wait, only to create numerous lists for future tasks. And in creating the lists of “things to do”, I miss Advent, which is the announcement of love that is and love to come.

We need to be drawn to the prompt of John the Baptist to prepare in a deeper way to experience God and to do God’s work, to repent, forgive, and bear good fruit. As we prepare our hearts, we prepare a way for God to enliven and transform us. Preparing a way for God, preparing a welcoming place for Jesus in my heart, demands that I live a life that shows a spirit of understanding, wisdom, endurance, courage, harmony, truthfulness, authenticity, and reconciliation. Preparing a way for the Lord and making the way straight also means listening to God intentionally and removing the blockages and obstacles which prevent God from coming close to me. Advent might also be a good time for us to intentionally look into the parts of our life that need straightening out and then maybe in the process even find the courage to stay a little while longer in the discomfort of waiting and preparation which could sometimes fill the Advent space.

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

CAMP GILMOUR IS BACK FOR WINTER CAMP 2022:

Camp Gilmour is hosting six one-day camps for campers ages 5-12 during winter break. Campers can return to campus and renew old friendships, make new ones and have a great time! Winter Camp has something for everyone! Join us for seasonal games and crafts, swimming, ice skating, field trips and a New Year’s party.

Camp is in session from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. on the following dates: Tuesday, December 20, Wednesday, December 21, Thursday, December 22, Tuesday, December 27, Wednesday, December 28, and Thursday, December 29. Each day is a separate camp. Registration opens November 11th. Sign up today for one or all six days at gilmour.org/wintercamp/

WE NEED HELP:

Gilmour Academy is looking for reliable, skilled maintenance workers to perform upkeep and essential tasks throughout our campus. In this position, you will be responsible for a variety of duties, including repairs, and event set-ups and take-downs. Candidates must be reliable and self-motivated. The schedule for this position can be flexible — full-time, part-time, days, evenings, weekends. Contact Gilmour Academy’s Human Resources Department at (440) 473-8000 x1004 or visit gilmour.org/about/careers for more details.

A THOUGHT:

Peace without justice is only a ceasefire.

—Ken Scott

REALITY AND CHANGE:

Here we are with Christmas just three weeks away. The shops and malls are loaded with goodies. Christmas songs fill the air. Parties are being arranged and delicacies prepared. Thoughts of home, of family, and of a lovely time fill our hopes and imaginations.

With all of these lovely sentiments in our hearts and minds, we hear about a weird guy living in the desert, wearing scratchy and horribly smelling clothes made of camel's hair, eating locusts, calling people a bunch of snakes while telling them that fire and brimstone will come down on them, all the while threatening them with axes that will cut them down [Matthew 3:1-12]. The gospel picture ends with John the Baptist threatening the Sadducees and Pharisees with hell.

This is not a very heart-warming message. Is this what Christmas is all about? Well, John the Baptist reminds us that it's likely we all need to pay attention to a few things that perhaps we have neglected in our lives — things that revolve around the presence of Christ — or His absence.

Take for instance those with whom we live — our wives, our husbands, our children, our parents, our friends. How have we loved them? How have we failed to love them? Who have we downright neglected or not treated as we should have?

Too often, we take those around us for granted. We give them little, if any, of our time, our attention, our affection. Maybe we haven't cared for them very well at all. It seems strange that we sort of assume that they know we love them without our ever actually telling them or showing them that we do dearly love them. Daily routines, concerns about our work, and our habits can cause us to pay attention to material things at the expense of giving our families and friends our real attention, care, concern, and love. Maybe this Christmastime we can actually give them more of our selves as we prepare to celebrate the love of God for us made real in Christ Jesus.

What about our parents and our grandparents who live some distance away from us? Have we neglected them too? And our friends? Are there some changes we need to make because of our neglect?

Then there are those with whom we work. Our attitudes toward them are expressed in the ways we treat them or otherwise relate to them. Attitudes are the sources of human behavior. If we want to reform the way we treat others, we have to begin with our attitudes toward them. We need to hear John the Baptist's message as it applies to us.

Then, too, we should pay some attention to the way we have neglected our own selves. Are we physically out of shape? Overweight? Do we overindulge ourselves? Do we drink too much, drink too often, or eat too much? Do we care for ourselves?

What is at issue is the way we have failed to love, failed to love and respect others, and failed to have love and respect our selves — selves that God gave us when He brought us into life in the first place. John the Baptist's words ought to raise questions we should face and answer.

Finally, there is the matter of Christ himself. We profess our faith in Him and our love for Him. But talk is cheap and words are easily spoken. It's what we do that gives substance to love. Today we need to take an honest look at what we are actually doing in our daily lives that reveals our faith and love in Christ. Just how real is our relationship with Jesus Christ?

Repentance means change. And change is something we dislike. If you are driving to a destination and make a wrong turn, you can't just say "oops" and continue on driving in a wrong direction. You have to turn around and get back on the right path. You have to make a change that makes a difference. Change has its demands — demands that go beyond mere words of regret. Advent calls us to make some changes in our routines.

Advent has more to offer us, however, than that. Advent has a Savior for us. Beyond our own

community that is wounded by our sin. And because of this, the ideal way to confess would be to go in front of a packed church on a Sunday morning and begin our confession by saying: "Bless me community — for I have sinned!"

Confession is not so much about having one's sins forgiven as it is about coming to maturity within the community and being able to live a transparent life, free of dark secrets, addictions, and rationalization. The Baptist's message is as true today as it was 2000 years ago. To make straight the path for the coming of the Savior, to make a proper advent, to prepare ourselves to have Christ born in our lives, we need to undergo a baptism for the remission of sin. In simple talk, that means, among other things, making a searing, honest, open, confession.

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

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — DECEMBER 17th:

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. This is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

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**

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, November 26]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-in]----- \$ 505.00

Offerings-----[Sunday, November 27]----- \$ 239.00

PEACE:

Peace is not the product of terror or fear. Peace is not the silence of cemeteries. Peace is not the silent result of violent repression. Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all. Peace is dynamism. Peace is generosity. It is a right and it is a duty.

—St. Oscar Romero



READYING OURSELVES FOR CHRISTMAS:

John the Baptist tries to prepare the way for Jesus by calling people to repentance: “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near” [Matthew 3:1-12]. Whatever else that means, it includes the idea that one of the best ways we can prepare for Christmas is by making a good, honest, searing confession. To repent means to confess our sins.

This notion has fallen out of favor. The idea of confession is very much challenged today. At a practical level, less and less people are in fact going to confession. The old line-ups at the confessional box are becoming shorter and shorter. As well, more and more people are challenging, theoretically, the idea of sacramental confession. Arguments against it take many forms — “I don’t find it meaningful!” “It’s too privatized!” “There isn’t any need to do this to have one’s sins forgiven! God doesn’t need our mediation.” “It gives undue power to the priest!” “This is an affair between God and myself.” “It’s adolescent!” “The priests don’t have time to do it properly.” Whatever the objection — and there are many — fewer and fewer people going to confession.

This is an unfortunate development because private confession is one of the pillars of the spiritual life. At a certain point in one’s growth, there is no progress without it. Why? Why confession? Why the need to tell ones sins to a priest? Surely the radical mercy and forgiveness of God are not contingent upon telling our sins to a priest? Surely God’s mercy cannot be controlled by or limited to one prescribed ritual? In both scripture and church tradition it is clear that our sins are forgiven through sincerity of conscience and through touching the body of Christ — and this has many forms. The Christian community itself is the radical sacrament of reconciliation and God’s mercy can never be tied down to just one vehicle of grace. So why confession?

The Baptist’s message is as true today as it was 2000 years ago. Simply put, confession is the sacrament of the mature, and one grows mature by confessing one’s sins. Mature people face themselves and apologize explicitly — and people grow mature by apologizing. The critics of the sacrament of reconciliation are right in saying that God is not tied down to one vehicle as an avenue for the forgiveness of sins. They are wrong however when they denigrate the importance of private confession. One may not have to confess one’s sins explicitly to another human being to have them forgiven, but one does have to confess them explicitly if he or she hopes to live a transparent life, free of addictions, rationalization, and dark skeletons in the closet.

“You are as sick as your sickest secret!” That’s an axiom popular among people working in 12-step programs. They know the truth of that through personal experience. They also know that until one faces oneself, in searing honesty, before another human being and there acknowledges openly his or her sins, there will always be addictions, rationalization, and lack of real transparency. It has taken us a long time to understand the nature of addictive behavior — and even longer to learn how to deal with it. One of the things we have learned — and this is a pivotal and non-negotiable step in every 12-step program — is that there has to be an open, honest, and searing admission of sin, face to face, before another human being. Without this, at a certain point, all real growth stops. The church has always had its own version of this — we called it confession, the sacrament of reconciliation.



It can of course still be argued: Why before a priest? In the letter of James in the New Testament, we are encouraged simply to confess our sins to each other [see James 5:16]. So why a priest? Because a priest symbolically represents the whole community. In confessing to a priest, we are, in a manner of speaking, confessing to the entire community. A friend of mine is fond of saying that sacramental confession, as presently practiced, is an unhappy compromise, far from ideal. That is correct — though not in the way my friend thinks. We owe our confession to the whole community — since it is the entire

efforts to recognize sin and failure in our lives, beyond our confessions and admissions that lead us to repent, Advent presents us with what we truly need — a Savior. For if we’re honest with ourselves, we will admit that we cannot deal with sin, repentance, and conversion all on our own. We can’t manage our lives all by ourselves.

So, I’ll leave you with the first three steps of the famous Twelve Steps found in Alcoholic Anonymous. Of the twelve, the first three are the most vital and critical. They deal with what John the Baptist is talking about. So, substituting the word sin for the word alcohol the steps are:

1. We admitted we were powerless over sin — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe in a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

The only thing in life that is constant is change. The only certitude is this: that there is life where there is change. Something that is changeless is dead.

Change is hard on us all — on you and on me alike. It’s very difficult for everyone because who or what guarantees that things will be better as a result of change? A life lived close to God is the only real guarantee we have.

The wonderful thing about Advent is that in the end we are given the certitude of God’s presence in our lives in Jesus Christ. Advent is all about our expectant faith in the God who loves us enough to send us His very best — His only Son. And if we receive Him in our hearts and souls, deep down within and not simply with good wishes and nice thoughts, then the change that we enter into will move from incertitude into the certainty of God’s abiding love deep within us to empower us to deal with our selves, and to love ourselves and those around us as He would have us.

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

POINTING TO THE STAR:

Advent is the season of waiting. Its function is to remind us what we’re waiting for as we go through life too busy with things that do not matter to remember the things that do. When year after year we hear the same scriptures and the same hymns of longing for the life to come — of which this is only its shadow — it becomes impossible to forget the refrains of the soul.

Advent relieves us of our commitment to the frenzied in a fast-paced world. It slows us down. It makes us think. It makes us look beyond “today” to the “great tomorrow” of life. Without Advent, moved only by the race to nowhere that exhausts the world around us, we could be so frantic with trying to consume and control this life that we fail to develop within ourselves a taste for the spirit that does not die and will not slip through our fingers like melted snow.

It is while waiting for the coming of the reign of God, Advent after Advent, that we come to realize that its coming depends on us. What we do will either hasten or slow, sharpen or dim our own commitment to do our part to bring it.

We all want something more. Advent asks the question, what is it for which you are spending your life? What is the star you are following now? And where is that star in its present radiance in your life leading you? Is it a place that is really comprehensive enough to equal the breadth of the human soul?

—taken from the writings of Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B., which appear on the internet

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

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



FOLLOWING CHRIST TODAY:

Many years ago, when I was still in Seminary training, we were required to spend a semester in jail ministry. It was a very positive experience. Once a week we would go and hold a prayer service for the inmates. Then we would spend some time afterwards sharing coffee and talking with them. But before I began that semester, I remember asking one of the older seminarians who had already completed this phase of training, what his experience of it was. He said: “Oh it’s challenging, but quite important. I think you’ll learn a lot from it.” Then he looked at me and said: “But get ready for a lot of old altar servers.”

Now, I did not know what he meant by that comment. But I discovered as I became involved in the ministry, that a remarkable number of the inmates — perhaps one out of every three — would tell me: “Father, I used to be an altar server.” Now this perplexed me, and I tried to explain it. I wondered whether there was a connection between being an altar server when you were young and ending up in prison. But I want to assure all who currently are....or have been....altar servers that there is absolutely no connection!

But I was able to conclude that either the inmates were trying to hustle me and impress me with their connection to the church, or they were sincerely sharing with me a moment of their life when they felt close to God. In time, I began to pray that they were hustling me, because how sad would it be that these men, many in their fifties and sixties, would have to go all the way back to their childhood to locate a moment when they felt they were serving God.

One of the lessons that I learned from that semester was this: The important question is not what have we done for God? The important question is what have we done for God lately? That seems to be the issue that John the Baptist has in Matthew’s gospel. When some of the religious leaders come for baptism, John insists that they must demonstrate their goodness by their actions. He does not want them to presume their holiness by saying that they have Abraham as their ancestor. Now, having Abraham as your ancestor was a good thing — and John the Baptist certainly respected it. But he insisted that their pedigree be accompanied with action. Or to put it in other terms, what had they done for God lately?

To be a follower of Jesus is not simply to collect a couple actions of faith and love and then move on to other things. To follow Jesus is a way of life. It is not enough to garner together a couple religious experiences that you can point to when the topic comes up in conversation. Being a disciple is living today and every day as a person who is trying to build the Kingdom of God. That is why Jesus asks us to follow him daily. He says: “I know that last Christmas you were very generous with that family that was experiencing financial difficulty. But that was a year ago, and there are people still struggling. I am counting on you to be a sign of my love. I know that you told your wife that you loved her and were thankful for her on her anniversary, but that was months ago. Have you told her that recently? I know that you have stood up for someone who was being ridiculed at school or at work, and I was proud when you did that. But that was some time ago and they are still people being abused today.” Each day Jesus says: “I am proud of the ways that you have acted in service, in justice, and love to others, but I need that to continue. What have you done for me lately?”

Now that question of Christ can seem demanding — and even unreasonable. But I assure you, it is not Christ’s intention to shame us or to place heavy obligations upon us. For the truth is that doing what Christ asks us to do — following his will — is the best thing that we can do for ourselves. There is no deeper satisfaction than knowing that we have served as he has asked us to serve, that we have forgiven as he has asked us to forgive, that we have loved as he has asked us to love. Doing his will is the greatest joy we can achieve. He asks us to do his will, not for his benefit, and not only for the benefit of others,

**What have you
done for me
LATELY?**

people of justice and love. The manner in which we treat others has far deeper implications than our relationship to this or that individual. When we are kind to someone, we are making the Kingdom a reality in that person’s life. When we treat someone with justice, we are providing the world with an experience of God’s presence.

For example, let say that a retired person’s adult children have been rather unapproachable during the year. They have not bothered about the family. Their own lives were too important and too busy to call to Mom or Dad. Now they want to come to visit for Christmas. Mom and Dad may feel that they have a right to treat them coldly. But if, instead, they are kind and loving — forgetting their absence in past and enjoying their presence — then those children will know what it is like to be welcomed back home not just by their parents, but by God. They will have an experience of the Kingdom of God in the justice of their Godly parents. Maybe it’s not the children of a retired person, but a brother or sister who has hurt a sibling and now wants to be warm and friendly for Christmas. Perhaps, they did the same thing last year and the year before, then restored hostilities shortly after the tree came down. It makes no difference. No one can hold a grudge and be a Christian. The conquest of the Kingdom is more important than the rationale for an argument.

When people are genuinely welcoming, when people are warm, then they are godly people working to transform the world — one person, one grudge at a time. Perhaps it’s the Teen in school who has invented new ways to be nasty to others. He or she is the least popular person in the class — a distinction he or she has earned by saying things about others, by making others’ lives difficult, by just plain being mean. Shock him or her. Give this Teen a Christmas card and truly wish that he or she has a beautiful Christmas. You will be giving the Teen a great Christmas present — an experience of God. You and I need to do this and similar actions because we have the blessing of being called into the Kingdom of God. Not by appearances does the Lord judge, but by justice, and kindness, and the determination to let the presence of God prepare others to enter His Kingdom. This is justice. And this justice will transform the world. This is our Advent Hope.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday:	Isaiah 35:1-10, Luke 5:17-26
Tuesday:	Isaiah 40:1-11, Matthew 18:12-14
Wednesday:	Isaiah 40:25-31, Matthew 11:28-30
Thursday:	Genesis 3:9-15, Ephesians 1:3-12, Luke 1:26-38
Friday:	Isaiah 48:17-19, Matthew 11:16-19
Saturday:	Sirach 48:1-11, Matthew 17:9-13

3rd Week in Advent: Isaiah 35:1-10, James 5:7-10, Matthew 11:2-11

WHAT WE VALUE:

The great struggle takes place in the heart of every person — in every materialist just as much as in every religious person. We cannot say that the good are on one side and the bad on the other, nor is it true that the religious life is good while the materialist life is bad. The important thing is to discern where materialist thinking puts its faith, and where religious life finds its god — where the spirit of each is found and what each values.

—Eberhard Arnold

NOT BY APPEARANCES:

I love dressing up for Sunday Mass, and I love seeing so many in our parish who dress up for Church. People are very interesting. Everyone has his or her own look. Consider me. I have my own look. And it takes a lot of time for me to get this look. The washing, the primping, the *Just for Men*, the combing; it takes a lot of time. Then there's the picking out the right outfit for the day — "Let's see what should I go with today, black, or black, or my favorite, black?" A teenager once asked me why priests wear black. I told him: "school colors." Anyway, having primped and chosen my wardrobe, my day starts with me making the proper appearance as a priest. I hope you appreciate it — because God, certainly, does not care. Remember what the prophet Isaiah wrote: "Not by appearance shall he judge" [Isaiah 11:-10]. God is not impressed by our coiffure, our wardrobe — or even our demeanor. God doesn't care if someone has a pietistic attitude that makes you wonder if he or she is a model for a plastic sculpture of a saint.

He doesn't care if someone does not appear different than any one else — He doesn't care. There was no missing the Pharisees and Sadducees when they came before John the Baptist [Matthew 3:1-12]. Both groups had distinctive garb to demonstrate their holiness. John, reflecting God's attitude, was not impressed. He called them a "Brood of Vipers." Definitely not impressed. Nor does God care what anyone says about someone else. You know: "She is really a saint," or "He is such a loser." No, God doesn't judge by hearsay either.

So, how does God judge? And why was John so negative regarding the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to be baptized? According to Isaiah, God judges by actions. He judges by justice. The way people live, the way they treat others is what matters. He judges by justice. The biblical concept of justice is deeper than the legal connotation of justice. In the Bible, justice is the correct relationship with the Lord. Evidence of this relationship is seen in every action of a just person's life. We call a person a "Godly Man" or a "Godly Woman" because the love of God is seen in the way he or she treats others. The Godly Man is a Just Man. The Godly Woman is a Just Woman. That's why John was furious with the Pharisees and Sadducees. There was nothing godly about these self-styled paradigms of holiness.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were more concerned that others respected them than they were about how they treated others. They looked down at people as though they were dirt. But they were the ones whose bellies were in the dirt. So, John called them by their just name: "Brood of Vipers." If they wanted to prove John wrong, they could. He told them they could. What they needed to do was produce good fruit as evidence of their commitment to God — show their repentance. That's why John didn't kick them out. He baptized them too. Have you mastered proper, plastic, pietism? Can you get your heads tilted at the proper slant so that all around you will expect you to be swooped up into heaven at any moment? I hope not. That is not what this Kingdom that John proclaimed is all about. What the Kingdom of God is about is wisdom and understanding, and counsel and courage and reverence for the Presence of God. The cardinal virtues speak about seeing God in others and in the world and acting according to that vision. Each virtue leads us to make justice the band around our waists. Imagine what a beautiful world we would live in if people were truly godly. It would be a world where there was no hatred, or fear, or war, or suffering. Isaiah became quite poetic when he considered this world — the wolf shall be the guest of the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the baby goat, the calf and the lion shall browse together and the lion won't have veal for lunch. The cow and the bear will get along. And children would no longer die. The baby will play in the cobra's den and not be bitten. The child will put his hand in the adder's lair and not be hurt — "There shall be no harm or ruin on my holy mountain". The ideal is upon us. The Kingdom of God is transforming the world. And we can be part of this transformation. We can change the world by being godly people. We can change the world by being



but for ourselves. We find joy in his commands. That is why it is important that we do not rest on our laurels. We cannot be content because once we were an altar server, or once we sacrificed for the sake of someone else. Christ is counting on us today and every day, to build his kingdom — to be people of service, justice, and love. That is what he asks. That is what he commands. We would do well to follow his commands, for doing his will brings us lasting joy. His question: "What have you done for me lately," is really only another way of asking: "What have you recently done for yourself?"

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

THE COMMUNITY IS ONE:

Near the end of his long letter to the Christian community in Rome, Paul reminds his brothers and sisters that the Scriptures — what we call the Old Testament — were written to instruct them and to encourage them so that they might have hope. He asks God to grant them the grace to follow Christ's example by "thinking in harmony with one another," by living in "one accord," and by glorifying God in "one voice" [Romans 15:4-9].

With the division between Jewish and Gentile converts in mind, Paul insists that Christ ministered to the Jews to confirm the promises made to Abraham — which included salvation for the Gentiles. Following the example of Christ, the Christian community should "welcome one another" for the glory of God.

Paul's call for unity is much needed in our fragmented world with deep religious, cultural, economic and political divisions. He provides us with a solid theological foundation for joining in the great task of overcoming divisions and bringing people together. We are all members of the one human family. The God who loves every person wills the salvation of all people. Jesus, the community builder, reached out to those banished to the margins and welcomed sinners. His death and resurrection unleashed the Spirit, who draws all people into a communion of love.



As Christians we are called to carry on the community forming ministry of Christ in our sphere of influence. Sue, a wife and mother of three teenagers, works hard to keep their family together and each individual happy. She and her husband talk regularly about shared approaches to raising their children. She sometimes initiates conversations with her spouse on how they can keep their love alive and continue to grow together spiritually. Attuned to the unique personality of each of her children, she tries to make them all feel special. When disputes occur, she encourages them to work it out themselves — part of her overall effort to educate them to be responsible adults. Supported by her husband, she promotes the practice of sharing meals together, at least once a week, with no cell phones allowed. She welcomes her kid's friends into their home, and makes sure they have their own space. Over the years she has insisted that her family respect her time outside the family circle — including her part-time job as a secretary and her leisure time with women friends. Sue finds strength and guidance for living her vocation by participating in the Sunday Mass along with her husband and children who still attend regularly with her.

Sam, who owns a small advertising agency, lives out his community forming vocation at the worksite. He knows all of his employees by name; he spends time getting to know them and something of their personal lives; and periodically consults them on how to make the business more efficient and productive. He purposely hires people of diverse racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds — convinced that diversity produces more creative ideas. During the recession, he kept some people on the payroll even though it hurt the business financially. Sam regularly prays for his employees who are really more like family.

How can you promote community in your own circle of influence?

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

DISCIPLESHIP — CONSISTENCY IS KEY:

The quote that marked my later high school and early college years was, “Life isn’t about finding yourself — it is about creating yourself.” It’s from George Bernard Shaw. At seventeen, I knew this was it. I had a reversion to the faith, and I was challenged in how I wanted to live my life, and how I wanted to just be. I spent my junior and senior years of high school unlearning what I thought to be true about myself. I let myself dream, and I created the person I was into who I knew myself to be. It was the most liberating experience and those years were pretty formative for me. The best part of it all was that my faith became deeply rooted in my heart as I began to search for the Truth I had initially found in the Catholic Faith.

Going into college, I had the opportunity to actually do anything. When I saw the ideal of freedom, I jumped at the chance to pursue it. In the quest of creating myself, I could choose to sin or not. I did. I could also choose to do things that would skate the line of moral and immoral. I would do both. And while the freedom felt amazing, there was always an emptiness that would grow.

I engaged in things that were sinful or immoral. It could be a little thing like saying something hurtful to someone I love, or something bigger, like abusing illegal substances and drinking underage. Both cases are pretty bad and both would make that emptiness grow. But when I engaged in my faith, service to my community, or ministry on my campus, the emptiness would get smaller and I would feel more complete.

After my years of living up in the clouds, I came to the reality that there was something deeper under the surface. My sins or my wounds were places where I would try to satisfy a desire out of order. And living into my faith and falling in love with Christ helped me recognize that my desires were good and could become rightly ordered if I let Jesus into them. I decided to sit with that in prayer and let the Lord speak.

“Return” has been a word that keeps coming up in my own prayer. To return means to go back to a place or person. I’ve come to know now, that those years of “creating myself” were actually just a return to the person I was called to be by God — beloved and free. For many years before that, I had lived in a mindset of “I have to be intelligent, funny, deep but not too deep, skinny, on top of my stuff, etc.” It was exhausting. But because I am loved, I only have to rejoice in my belovedness. And because I am the beloved, I am free. Our freedom is something that is gifted to us from the beginning, it is never lost just forgotten. Most times we are the ones who trap ourselves in the mindset of how our lives have to look and be.

The call Christ has for us in our lives is to return to Him, and in our return to Him, we return to ourselves — we become who He created us to be. It may take a few falls and coming face to face with our own humanity and brokenness, but little by little, we find that Christ illuminates the true desires of hearts. And in that comes true freedom to always choose the good.

A life of liberation is what I seek in my own adventure with Christ. One where I can no longer be held down by the weight of the world and those desires that left me empty, but I can be lifted up to new heights with Jesus. This ideal I understood as freedom, transitioned into a standard of new life. With this realization of true freedom and as passionate Catholics, we now have a responsibility to engage and interact with the world in a way that aligns with who we are as well as honors our Faith and our Father. How do we get there? *Gaudium et Spes* — a Church document about the Church’s existence in the modern world — says: “Christ fully reveals man to himself and makes his supreme calling clear” [see paragraph #22. Looking to Christ gives us the answer we need.

One of my favorite things about Jesus is His consistency. His character is never in question. He lives His whole life following after the Father — there is no question of His faithfulness. Jesus calls

sinners to Himself, He heals every person who asks, He proclaims the Kingdom of heaven, He encounters people as they are and transforms them by His love. In the same way, we too are called to be consistent. Our lives should be an example of what it means to be faithfully Catholic. As the Universal Church, we are called to be inclusive, joyful, service-oriented, mission-minded, and collectively individual.

Even though the George Bernard Shaw quote has a nice sound to it, there is far more truth in the journey of returning to the person God meant for us to be. In high school, I wanted to return to the person God called me to be, and it was a good foundation. Even though I didn’t want to lose that in college, my actions caused me to lose sight of my true identity for a little bit of time. Looking back, I can see that the core desire I was seeking, was a sense of belonging. The Lord called me to liberation by showing me that he would provide a group of people who supported a healthy lifestyle and were still so much fun. Our joy was rooted in the joy of Jesus, and life felt more complete because of it.

After we’ve begun the journey of returning to ourselves, we are invited to live like Jesus. My invitation has looked like a life rooted in mission and service work, serving communities of people who are overlooked, are living in poverty, and are in a beautiful place to receive grace. Jesus has called me to the South Bronx, NY, my college in Mobile, AL, and to the North GA mountains. The invitation can be a little scary; we only have to keep our eyes on Jesus as a model for consistency.

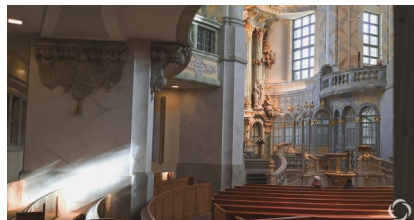
Where are the desires in your own heart that are fundamentally good, but are a little out of whack right now? How and where is the Lord calling you to a life of liberation and freedom? And how are you being called to live like Jesus? Remember, it is about returning, freedom, and a life that follows after Christ. The joy of this process is that it forms us to live our lives in a way that fully embraces our individuality and follows after Him. With these things ingrained in how we live, we can continue to grow more fully into the person we are meant to become. —taken from the writings of Alyssa Miles, 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. 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].**



LIFE TEEN

**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14th:**

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, December 14th 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: The “O” Antiphons

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..

