

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ Prayer for the 3rd Week in Advent ~

I praise you, Lord,
and ask,
who am I —
a small one of the earth —
that the word of the Lord
should come to me?

Open my ears
that it may be a word
that compels me
to do what is right and just.
Open my heart
that it maybe a word of rejoicing.

O Majesty,
O Splendor
greater than the mountains and the sky!
I am a child of earth
who adores you.
I love you,
And I live
because you have desired me.

Praised be God
whose greatness has reached
to the ends of the earth.
Let me live in your presence
and give thanks through your name!
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.

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 us.

**OLC “ADOPT A FAMILY” PROGRAM:**

We have a number of Families from St. Adalbert School who have not been “Adopted” yet, and the time is drawing near. For many years, Our Lady Chapel community has worked with St. Adalbert Parish in adopting families to help them celebrate the Christmas Season. St. Adalbert has identified families — most often single parent, below poverty level families, and we have this list in the Chapel Office now. **Please stop in and see Patty or Fr. John, or email szaniszlop@gilmour.org or call the office (440)473-3560, to be matched with a family.**



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. A grocery store gift card is also requested for each family. 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 reach out if you are interested in participating. **“Adopt-a-Family” gifts need to be returned by Sunday, December 18th.**

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 by Tuesday, December 13th. Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560] if you have any questions.

**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 Findley Stay, husband of former Gilmour Instructor, Emily Stay, father of Allen Stay [‘87], who is undergoing treatment for a serious blood disorder.
- For Louis Figueroa, adoptive-father of Music Director, Andy Andino, who is critically ill due to kidney failure.
- For Andy Andino, Sr., father of Music Director, Andy Andino, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.

FOR THE DECEASED:

- 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.
- For Patrick Lysobey, cousin of Lower School Religion Instructor, Nora Joyce.
- For Maeve Simon, cousin of Lower School Art Teacher, Eileen Sheehan.
- For Matthew Totarella [‘96], brother of Denise Totarella DeLuca [‘94], uncle of Katie DeLuca [‘26], nephew of Richard Lavigna [‘78]
- For Patricia Lewis, grandmother of Liam [‘21] and Charlotte [‘24] Ottaway.
- For Boniface Kwangu
- For Eleanor DeMarco, mother of Kathy DeMarco, and Chapel Assoc. Patty Szaniszlo (anniversary)

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

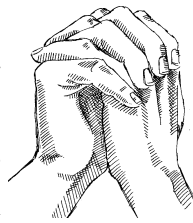
- For the Holy Cross Religious in Haiti, and for the people of that country, which is under siege because of political and civil strife.
- For a family going through a difficult time.
- For an end to violence and racial injustice in our society.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.

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 this Sunday [December 11th] at 8:45 AM. That will conclude our class meetings for the month of December, due to Christmas Break. There will be no class on Sunday December 18th, Dec. 25, or January 1st due to Christmas Break. **Classes will resume on Sunday, January 8th, 2023.** 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. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to stay with your family and celebrate Mass with us. **If you have any questions, please contact Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560]. A Blessed Christmas to all of our Faith Education families, and their teachers.** Thank you.



SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, December 11: 3 rd Week in Advent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, December 12: Our Lady of Guadalupe	Check with Office for time
Tuesday, December 13:	Check with Office for time
Wednesday, December 14: St. John of the Cross	Check with Office for time
Thursday, December 15:	Check with Office for time
Friday, December 16:	Check with Office for time
Saturday, December 17: 4 th Week in Advent	5:00 PM In Person
Sunday, December 18: 4 th Week in Advent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

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**

COURAGE:

True courage is not the absence of fear — but the willingness to proceed in spite of it.

REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

The Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote a poem about patience as a hard thing to pray for. “Waiting, longing, wondering what’s taking so long”, are experiences we’d rather avoid. Things for which we do not have to wait — things and persons who are automatically present — tend to become just there — the usual.

There is a comfort in the usual, but there is something in the human soul which urges the new, different, or surprising. Advent reminds us that we want both the expected and the unexpected. This is a wonderful way to live because there is something of God in both. Our experiences of being surprised with the different and unusual of each day is a preparation for our celebration of the Eucharist and of God’s becoming one of us. The different can be an annoyance, but it does keep us alert and alive. May we come face to face with our resistance or skepticism about the unexpected in order to be welcoming.

The Jewish nation is distant from Jerusalem — they are in exile in Babylon. In the midst of their alienation from land and temple, a prophetic voice sings out a song of hope [Isaiah 35:1-10]. For us, Isaiah’s song is a picture of reversals. For the people in exile it would have been a dream — “Is it possible?” They were far from home in a captivity brought about by their failures to respond to God. They hear about a “coming soon!” from the very same God Whom they had rejected.

The promise is all about change. The natural will change; the desert will become fertile and all the vegetation will sing out of the goodness and glory of God. Darkness will become light because God is coming — so stay awake and do not give in to despair. These are words of encouragement to a repentant nation long in exile. The blind and mute and deaf will be made whole. The entire people will see and hear and sing with joy as they re-enter Jerusalem.

Matthew’s Gospel pictures John — whom we heard last week baptizing and announcing that someone new is coming — is now in prison. He sends his followers to Jesus with one good question. John is not doubting Jesus; rather in his personal exile in prison, he needs a sign of hope. The question is about whether or not Jesus is the Messiah [Matthew 11:2-11].

The answer of Jesus to John relies on John’s familiarity with the message of Isaiah — the blind, the mute, the leper are healed. The dead are raised and the poor have the “good news” preached to them. The words that Isaiah spoke have now become reality. John will be comforted by the report his disciples give him.

As they are departing, Jesus speaks to crowds about this person — John. They had gone out to see him and listened to his calling. They might have had certain expectations and even suspicions. John was found to be strong, dedicated, and living what he believed. He was not a trembling reed, but a true prophet of God. Of all the prophets — and indeed of all born the natural way — John is the greatest.

Then Jesus takes the opportunity to confound, yet invite His listeners. There is a new level of existence. There is a new way of being born. There is a different way of judging greatness. The least person living this new way is greater than John the Baptist whom Jesus has just stated to be the greatest born the old and natural way. Jesus is continuing His call to all Jewish listeners to be born of this new, unexpected, surprising, “supernatural” way. Jesus has affirmed John, affirmed Himself to be the Messiah, and affirmed the establishment of His kingdom or way of living.

This third week in Advent has often been called “Rejoice Sunday”. And there is some cause for that spirit. But there’s a problem. We hear it said that we should be careful about what we pray for. Advent can be dangerous! We are invited to pray for the coming of Jesus as a baby. The real problem with Jesus is that He grew up; He spoke and lived His truth. By His doing that, we are invited to listen and live those same truths! We are all in a captivity to the familiar, to our ways, and to our expectations.



READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

- Monday:** Zechariah 2:14-17, Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a; 10ab, Luke 1:39-47
- Tuesday:** Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Matthew 21:28-32
- Wednesday:** 1 Corinthians 2:1-10a, Luke 14:25-33
- Thursday:** Isaiah 54:1-10, Luke 7:24-30
- Friday:** Isaiah 56:1-3a; 6-8, John 5:33-36
- Saturday:** Genesis 49:2; 8-10, Matthew 1:1-17

4th Week in Advent: Isaiah 7:10-14, Romans 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-24

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — DECEMBER 17th:

Our Savior Lutheran Church, across the street from Gilmour, has a Food Pantry which will be distributing for Christmas **the third Saturday of this 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. 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 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, December 3]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-in]----- \$ 420.00
Offerings-----[Sunday, December 4]----- \$ 680.01

PATIENT WAITING:

Many Catholic scripture scholars think the letter of James was written in the late first century by an unknown author who attributed it to James, the brother of the Lord, who led the Jerusalem church until his martyrdom around 62 AD. Throughout the letter, there is a common expectation that Jesus would return soon to complete his saving work. Given his delay, the author advises patience — like the farmer who patiently awaits harvest time after the rainy season — because “the coming of the Lord is at hand” [James 5:7-11]. James goes on to advise Christians to practice patience with their brothers and sisters, not complaining about one another so as not to be judged. The passage ends with an admonition to imitate the prophets as examples of patiently bearing hardships.

The letter of James prompts further reflection on developing the virtue of patience. For most of us, it is not a matter of waiting patiently for Christ to return at the end time — our challenge is to remain patient as we face the delays and hardships woven into everyday life: long lines at the checkout lanes; traffic jams on the commute to work; lingering colds that last longer than expected; delayed divorces that elude a conclusion; enduring vices that frustrate spiritual growth; physical diminishment that accompany the aging process; prejudices that continue to plague our society; and terrorist threats that defy quick solutions.

In the Christian tradition, patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, suggesting that learning patience involves cultivating a deeper prayer life that quiets the agitated heart. A busy executive finds she is more patient with colleagues if she meditates for ten minutes before going to work. Thomas Aquinas taught us that patience — an aspect of the cardinal virtue of fortitude — enables persons to face longstanding hardships with courage. A husband, who practiced the virtue of courage throughout his life, was able to sustain his care for his wife during the last two years of her life as she suffered the diminishment of Parkinson’s disease. A mother maintained a patient love for her rebellious teenage son by saying a prayer of gratitude every day for the way her parents were patient with her during her own turbulent adolescence.

How can I become a more patient person?

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

NURTURING THE ETERNAL LIFE WITHIN US:

The knowledge that Jesus came to dress our mortal bodies with immortality must help us develop an inner desire to be born to a new eternal life with him and encourage us to find ways to prepare for it. It is important to nurture constantly the life of the Spirit of Jesus — which is the eternal life — that is already in us. Baptism gave us this life, the Eucharist maintains it, and our many spiritual practices — such as prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, and spiritual guidance — can help us to deepen and solidify it. The sacramental life and life with the Word of God gradually make us ready to let go of our mortal bodies and receive the mantle of immortality. Thus death is not the enemy who puts an end to everything, but the friend who takes us by the hand and leads us into the Kingdom of eternal love.

— Henri Nouwen

NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:

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



Jesus asks to be born again in us who are to live with joy at our being released from our fears, blindness, deafness and leprosy.

These are dangerous and disturbing concepts — be careful what you pray for. John was affirmed in his belief that Jesus was the Messiah. The crowds — we — hear that Jesus is after changing, rearranging us, our values, our ways of seeing, listening, living. Surprises — such as Jesus — do take time to get accustomed to. Jesus is about to be born!

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

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

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

**ADVENT DEVOTIONS:**

On the table in the narthex of the Chapel are several Advent devotionals to assist you in your spiritual journey during this season of Advent. We hope that you will make use of them for you and your family. [1] **The Little Blue Book** with daily readings and devotions. This book corresponds to “The Little Black Book” that is so popular during Lent. [2] The daily scripture devotion, **The Word Among Us**, is available. It lists the scripture passage for the day along with a short reflection on one of the passages.

**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.

**GILMOUR IS HIRING:**

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.**

**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

ADVENT JOY:

In Matthew's Gospel, John the Baptist heard about Jesus' preaching and healing. He sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he is the Christ — the Messiah. Jesus told John's disciples to look around — "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them." What a scene those disciples of John reported back to the Baptist [Matthew 11:2-11]! It was a scene full of excitement and joy. This is what the Messiah came to bring — healing, peace, hope, and joy. John would know that the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled — "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" [Isaiah 35:5-6]. All John's disciples had to do was look around. The joy around them gave testimony to the presence of the Messiah. We also need to look around. There are tremendous reasons for us to be joyful. We are loved, and we have people we love. We have the sacraments. The presence of the Lord is real in our lives — especially the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

This real presence of the Lord is seen in all the sacraments. Consider the sacrament of matrimony. So many of our young adults are taking seriously their entrance into this sacrament. They are not concerned with sunsets or destination weddings. They are concerned with union together with God. Consider your own marriages. The vast majority of you have great marriages — despite the human failing you continually experience in each other and in yourselves. In fact, the very messiness that is humanity draws husbands and wives closer to each other and to God as you focus on your deep love. You continually reaffirm your marriage commitment in accepting each other every day — even though you live in a world where many people who refuse to make this commitment or take their marriage vows seriously. Consider the sacrament of reconciliation. Catholics particularly at this time of year are finding joy in this sacrament. The old days of this being a harsh, cold sacrament, where a person sat in the dark and was scolded by a priest who showed little compassion exist only in the movies or on television — if these days really ever existed at all. I never experienced that — and I'm old.

Reconciliation is a sacrament of joy. People approach it to return to joy or to reaffirm their joy. God's love is evident all around us. People are returning to worship out of love and desire to worship — not out of fear. That is certainly a reason for joy. People are realizing their need to receive the Eucharist regularly and are approaching the Lord's table every week with joy. Perhaps we all suffer from focusing so hard on particular problems that we do not see the total picture. All of us have battle stories. But when we focus on the negatives of our lives, we overlook the beauties and wonders of God's love we have been called to share. We forget about the joy of our children growing. We forget about the joy of our Lord's presence among us. We forget that we have people we love. We forget that we are loved — both by other people, and particularly, by the Lord. It is true, that we have to recognize that there are many around us who live in fear. Sickness, financial problems, questions about their future, struggles within their families, can cause people to live in fear. Many people are afraid to stand up for their faith, afraid that they will be mocked and excluded or at least marginalized from society, be that society in general or at school, work or the neighborhood.

These people need us to take up the commission that God gave to the prophet, Isaiah:



"Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak, say to those whose hearts are frightened: 'Be strong, fear not! Here is your God. He comes with vindication; with divine recompense. He comes to save you' " [Isaiah 35:1-10]. We are called to be people who bring joy to a fearful world. The basic attitude of a Christian is joy.

I can't help but think of St. Teresa of Calcutta and her sisters — the Missionaries of Charity. Mother Teresa worked in the most loathsome conditions in the world. She and her sisters pulled dying people out of filthy streets and gutters, giving these poor people the gift of dying with dignity. Now, you would think that the Missionaries of Charity would be serious and somber. They experience so much suffering. But if you ever heard St. Teresa speak, or seen a program where her sisters are interviewed, you know that this is a cheerful group of Christian women. They are happy because they know that as they draw close to those who are dying in such horrible ways, they are drawing closer to God. They experience the presence of the Lord.

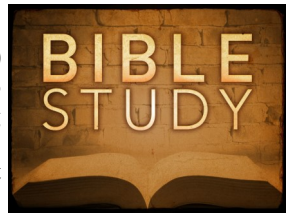
How can they keep from singing His praise? The Lord is close to them. And the Lord is close to you and to me. He is closer to us than our fondest imagination. The Kingdom of God is at hand — as close to us as our hand is to our face. God loves us. He cares for us. We are His. His Son, Jesus is with us. His Spirit is our life-force. Our lives have meaning, and purpose. Our lives will have fulfillment. The New World of the Kingdom of God is so close. We must rejoice!

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

NEXT BIBLE STUDY: WEDNESDAY, 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..

**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].**

