

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer for Peace ~

God of the nations,
whose sovereign rule brings
justice and peace,
have mercy on our
broken and divided world.
Send your peace
into the hearts of all
and banish from us
the spirit that makes for war —
that all nations,
and races
and peoples
may learn to live
as members of one family.

We pray for the innocent,
the frightened,
the dispossessed,
and those who have lost loved ones,
homes and family.

We pray that you would bless
the endeavours of those
who work for peace
and to bring an end
to the differences
that divide people.
Amen.

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.

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

IT WAS A GREAT PICNIC:

Thanks to all who helped make our annual Chapel Indoor Picnic such a great success. To our chapel Council, Patty Szaniszlo, AVI Food Service, and All For You Housekeeping — thank you. To Joe, Richard, and Lily who called our Bingo numbers — thank you. To those of you who brought your desert treats — thank you. And to each of you who came — thank you. What a great community time we had together. See everyone at our Summer Outdoor Picnic which takes place on **Sunday, July 9th**. Mark your Calendars.

LENTEN REGULATIONS:

Ash Wednesday and **Good Friday** are **fast days** for all between the ages of eighteen and fifty-nine. Fasting means that one full meal for the day is allowed, along with two light meals [snacks]. No eating between meals. Those not included in these “ages” are encouraged to take upon themselves some aspects of the fast, whenever possible.

Ash Wednesday and **All Fridays** during Lent are days of **abstinence from meat**, for those who are fourteen and older. Again, those not included in these “ages” are encouraged to participate whenever possible.

FAITH EDUCATION:

Faith Education meets next on Sunday, February 26th and then again on Sunday, March 5th at 8:45 AM. There are no classes on Sunday, February 12th [Super-Bowl Sunday] or February 19th [Presidents’ Day]. 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.

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.

2022 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS:

If you would like a copy of your 2022 Contributions to Our Lady Chapel, please call the chapel office [440-473-3560] and we will be glad to send it out to you. Since many have their own records and do not need to receive this statement, we have found that this is much more economical for us — as good stewards, we are trying to cut postage expenses from a mass mailing. Let us know if you need the statement sent to you and we will be glad to get it to you. Thanks for your understanding.

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].

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Rick DeBacco [*99], brother of Michelle DeBacco Chiacchiarri [*96], uncle of Aurelia [*28], and Olivia [*30] Chiacchiarri, who is undergoing treatment for pancreatitis.
- For Brother Walter Gluhm, C.S.C., who is under to care of hospice.
- For Susan Vance-Johnson, sister of Chief Advancement Strategy Officer, Ray Murphy, who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.
- For Bob Wolfe, who is undergoing treatment for serious health issues.
- For Don Glover, who is critically ill resulting from an infection.
- For Kathy and Jim Pender, parents of Mark [*83] and Michael [*90] Pender, grandparents of Matthew [*11], Charlotte [*13] Pender, and Katherine [*17] and Tyler [*19] Clark, who are both seriously ill with health issues.
- For Kevin Kennedy, who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic and lung cancer.

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Elaine Willey, sister of Father John [Birthday]
- For Howard Bullips, grandfather of Briana Redmon [*24]
- For James Maruna, grandfather of Johnny Maruna [*24]
- For Father Brad Beaupre, C.S.C.
- For Shawn Cross.
- For Richard Kuna, the father of Father Vince Kuna, C.S.C.
- For Sister Helen Davidson, O.S.U.
- For Father Edward Mehok, former chaplain of Notre Dame College
- For Father Thomas Elliott, C.S.C.
- For Mel Weltle, Sr., grandfather of Hannah [*21] and Trevor [*24] Weltle
- For Hans Schmidt, father-in-law of Mary Schmidt, grandfather of Brandon Schmidt [*08], Maggie Strippy [*12], and Jacqueline Schmidt [*13]
- For Angelo Lonardo, father of Joseph Lonardo [*00], and grandfather of Angelina [*22] and Giana [*22] Lonardo.
- For Lois Luther, the sister-in-law of Brother Ed Luther, C.S.C.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For the victims of the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria; also for their families and all the first responders.
- 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.

LIFE CHANGING:

Change is brought about because ordinary people do extraordinary things.

—Barack Obama

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Chuck Shade, father of Loren Shade, grandfather of Michael, Madeline, and Charles Shade, who is in seriously ill with several health issues.
- For Chuck Campanella, father of Anthony Campanella, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Brother Dan Kane, C.S.C., long-time Brother in Residence here at Gilmour, who is undergoing medical treatment for health issues
- For Bill McGinley, father of Chief Academic Officer, Elizabeth Edmondson, and grandfather of Mollie ['21] and Abby ['23] Edmondson, who is hospitalized with a serious infection
- For Laurie Lozier, sister of Fathers Bill and Jim Lies, C.S.C, who has been diagnosed with an aggressive form of dementia.
- For Kim Clark, who is undergoing treatment for an aggressive form of cancer.
- For James Routhier, husband of Grace O'Rourke Routhier ['08], who is recovering from brain surgery.
- For Beverly Jacklitch, mother of Kitchen Associate, Susan Jacklitch, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Paula Smith, mother of Tyler ['10] and Alec ['13] Smith, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- 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 Andy Andino, Sr., father of Music Director, Andy Andino, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jill Shemory, mother of Adam ['08], who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Carol Lowen, mother of Denise Shade, grandmother of Madeline, Michael, and Charles Shade, who is undergoing treatment for Breast Cancer.
- For Sue Elliott, who is critically ill with complications of Parkinson's Disease.
- For Cameron Monesmith, who is recovering from Brain surgery
- For Baylea O'Brian, friend of former Gilmour Teacher, Erin Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for Hodgkins Lymphoma
- For Walter Carey, who is undergoing treatment for leukemia.
- 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 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 recovering from cancer surgery.
- For Susan Plavcan, sister-in-law of Linda McGraw, 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 Bernice Girgash, aunt of Basketball Coach and Counselor, Dan DeCrane, and great-aunt of Mackenzie DeCrane ['36], who is undergoing treatment for 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.



NEXT BIBLE STUDY — THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23rd:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Thursday, February 23rd 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: To be decided shortly

We also need your help — we need future topics. **So, if you have a topic that you would like us to discuss, please let Father John know.** Mark your calendars and be part of this wonderful activity that will deepen your spiritual journey. **We will meet every other week — topic to be decided at the end of the previous meeting.** Join us. You'll have a blast, and celebrate your faith along the way..

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, February 26: 1st Week in Lent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, February 27:	Check with Office for time
Tuesday, February 28:	Check with Office for time
Wednesday, March 1:	Check with Office for time
Thursday, March 2:	Check with Office for time
Friday, March 3:	Check with Office for time
Saturday, March 4: 2nd Week in Lent	5:00 PM In Person
Sunday, March 5: 2nd Week in Lent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

A USER'S GUIDE:

If we are to commit ourselves to walking the way of the Lord, what must we do? First, we approach God through prayer, asking the One who created us and loves us to hear us, acknowledging our spiritual poverty and neediness. Next, we place ourselves trustingly in God's hands, letting go — as much as is humanly possible — of our need to be the gods of our own lives. We strive to be faithful in our prayer — if not crying to the Lord “all day long”, as the Psalmist says [see Psalm 86] — at least setting time aside to be in God's presence at each day's beginning and end, and in the moments of anxiety or uncertainty that may plague us throughout the day. In such prayer, we lift up our souls to God, offering our worries and sorrows, our successes and joys, with undiluted honesty. We praise, we confess, we thank, we ask. In all these modes of praying, as we offer our souls to God, we are expressing hope and trust in the Giver of all that is good. As the 20th-century spiritual master Henri Nouwen wrote: “If you pray in hope, all your concrete requests are mere ways of expressing your unlimited trust in him who fulfills all his promises, who holds out for you nothing but good, and who wants for himself nothing more than to share his goodness with you.” The road map for Lent — and for life — is before us. Will we follow the guide to the kingdom?
—taken from the writings of Betsy Cahill which appear on the internet

A REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME:

We enter the First full Week in Lent. The word Lent has Old English and Germanic roots which mean springtime and lengthening of days. Light is coming into our part of the hemisphere following the darkness of winter. The light of Jesus Christ is at the heart of Lent and Jesus gives us an opportunity to shine a light on any darkness in our lives. Are we lost in something that pulls us away from God?

The church in her wisdom has been preparing us for Lent the past few weeks with readings from Genesis describing our creation and gospel passages which encourage us to be salt and light for the world. God's great love has created us, and God has expectations about how to live life well. But it will not be perfect because we are not perfect.

The First Sunday of Lent begins in a Garden setting [Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17, 3:1-7] and will end with Good Friday's presentation of Jesus resisting temptation in another garden [Matthew 26:36-46] and His death and burial in a third [Matthew 27:57-60]. In these scriptural gardens then, we see growth, life, and death, — and then, New Life again.

Most of us a pretty well into Lent by now. We celebrated the liturgy of Ash Wednesday during this past week. These ashes are a yearly reminder of our every-day mortality and imperfection, as well as our need for our being conformed to the Gospel's call to live the redemption offered through Jesus. As we return this weekend, we dab Holy Water on our foreheads where there had been ashes on Wednesday. We are entering the celebration of that very redemptive act in union with others who also recognize their need for healing, encouragement, and the experience of belonging to God and God's family.

There is an ambiguity surrounding this “joyful season of Lent.” There is the definite spirit or sense that there is sin in the world — around us and within us. This is not a happy thought, of course, and we have to take stock of our personal participation in the sin of the world and the sin of our lives. Having to change our attitudes and actions might cause us some discomfort and shame.

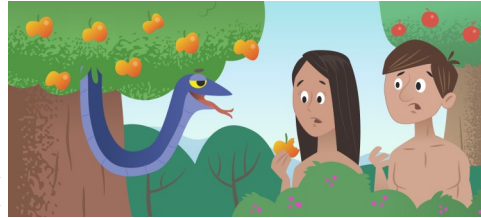
But there is also another spirit symbolized by the Holy Water. As Paul writes in Romans, “Where sin did abound, did grace the more abound” [Romans 5:12-19]. There is redemption, and healing, and union offered in and through the life, death and resurrection. We celebrate this at every Eucharist. Our personal deaths to self and sin will bring us to a more lively life now and some kind of new life for eternity. This is all about gift.

I personally love temptations. Yes, I really mean that. They do not entertain me, but they invite me to look at what is the good in me that is being tempted to devalue, under-use, or abuse. Temptations initiate my prayer-alarm, telling me that I need to enter into prayer. Temptations tell me about a most human condition whose truth is worthy of being graced by the light of grace and self-acceptance. Just for the record, while I do occasionally surrender to the truthy-lies the Tempter offers, I devoutly believe that God's grace is more powerful.

Our Scripture readings for this 1st Week in Lent opens with quite a story [Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17, 3:1-7]. It is a story about us all. We are Adam and Eve every day as we are so available to our wanting to be like God — or even, our being God.

The Book of Genesis sets up the other four books of the beginning of the Hebrew Scriptures — known as the Torah. The dictates, laws and customs follow Genesis' setting out structures and strictures preventing the people of Israel from following the many falls and failures of their collective religious past. This tendency to disobedience — sin — began somehow, and the painful consequences pictured in these early chapters are a reminder and warning to the Israelites of what will happen if they, too, disobey and make their own fatal choices. The serpent speaks to the “woman” about what God had spoken to them.

There's the tension — to whom shall we listen for life, its meaning and completion. To whom shall we

**RESTORING LIFE:**

Back in the late 60's, Pope Paul VI convened a unique meeting at the Vatican. Realizing the majority of anthropologists were convinced that the human race evolved from more than one set of “original parents,” the pontiff was anxious to explore how this rather new theory of polygenesis could fit into the Christian doctrine of original sin. Based the Book of Genesis [2:7-9, 15-17, 3:1-7], that doctrine presumed we all sprang from one set of parents who at one point in their early existence had committed a sin so serious that it not only affected them personally, but was somehow passed down to all their descendants.

Among those whom Pope Paul gathered were eminent scientists, Scripture scholars, anthropologists and theologians. Their final report was eventually published in the now-defunct *Critic* magazine. Though their opinions differed, they all seemed to agree on two things. First, the Yahwistic author of Genesis never expected us to take their biblical account of the “fall” literally. The author simply created a classical myth to explain the origins of something we all experience — a basic sinful disorder in each of our lives. Second, the actual original sin probably wasn't something our ancestors did, but something they didn't do.

According to these experts, the first humans were few enough to have definitively changed the moral environment in which they lived. But they didn't. Instead, time and time again they caved into their “dog eat dog” surroundings, refusing to replace the hateful situations they encountered with the love God intended them to display. The result was that their descendants were forced to face the same disordered environment — a climate which guaranteed it would be only a matter of time before each individual committed his or her original sin.

Keeping this perspective in mind, Paul is convinced Jesus of Nazareth totally changed the environment we daily encounter [Romans 5:12-19]. He reminds the Christian community in Rome that they no longer have to give in to the hatred and mistrust flourishing around them. The risen Jesus has overcome all that. And if we have the courage to join him in dying and rising, we'll also replace our disordered surroundings with an environment of love — “For, if by the transgression of the one, the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one man — Jesus Christ — overflow for the many?” Each of us has the ability to change our surroundings for the better.

In a similar way, Matthews Jesus begins his public ministry with the message that no longer will it be “business as usual.” Jesus is determined to alter the way people live their lives. He isn't, for instance, going to spend his life just taking care of people's physical needs. Changing stones into bread won't be a top priority. Jesus is determined to tackle the roots of our “screwed up” environment — not just the externals.

Neither is he going to do the spectacular — something that would make the headlines. No jumping off high buildings. Instead, he's committed to the day by day loving of those around him — the one thing that would definitely change everyone's life.

In the end, Jesus is simply not interested in having dominion over the “kingdoms of the world.” Those who lust after such a grandiose position have obviously made a pact with the devil to manipulate their sinful surroundings to their own selfish benefit, not to eradicate them.

It's easy to forget the kind of person we've committed ourselves to imitate. Jesus is someone who just didn't want his followers to avoid sin. More than anything, he expected them to change their environment enough that sin might no longer be the trap it was for those who first inhabited our planet.

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

THE GIFT:

The greatest gift that you can give to others is the gift of unconditional love and acceptance.

—Brian Tracy 17



someone in an effort to coach them into wrongdoing. Our opening line includes both definitions: The Spirit led Jesus to test his identity; the devil attempted to manipulate him to be untrue to it.

What is at play here — and in the whole of the Gospels — is Jesus' identity as son of God. Matthew began his Gospel with the genealogy — a description of Jesus' origins in the people of God. Now diabolos — the proper name of the chief of the demons — comes to direct him about how to fulfill his vocation among them.

We should note that this scene comes immediately after Jesus rose from baptism and heard the voice of God say: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" [see Matthew 3]. It seems that, following his choice to be baptized, Jesus' experience of the Spirit impelled him to explore and clarify what it meant to be son of God. Baptism led him to confront everything implied in the word temptation.

The temptations are archetypal with a great variety of interpretations and applications. For today, we might see them as tapping into the same confusing desires the snake used to snag Eve and Adam.

In the Genesis story, the snake told Eve that eating the forbidden fruit would make her/them like gods. The serpent mastered them, not because they were proud, but because they failed to recognize that they were already like the God who had breathed life into them and created them in the divine image. They got caught in a frenzy of trying to achieve for themselves what they had already been given for free.

Diabolos — a one-hit wonder — tried the same trick on Jesus. The first two temptations begin with the phrase: "If you are son of God" — with the implication that the tempter could define what that meant. The third temptation drops all pretense of faithfulness and offers an alternative life. We might think of them this way:

Diabolos: "If you are son of God, get the rocks out of your head! Hunger, thirst, and dependence on others are beneath you!"

Jesus: "A son of God revels in relationship. Both sides feed on the risk of being vulnerable to want and thus find greater fulfillment."

Diabolos: "If you are the true son, God should keep you safe, even from your own pretentious foolishness."

Jesus: "A son of God seeks God's will — and that's worth dying for."

Diabolos: "Forget this God business! Look around and admit it. Mine is the only power that runs the world."

Jesus: "Stay in your own hell if you wish. I have no power to stop you."

Jesus' temptations were not a one-time event, nor simply an experience in the desert and then the Garden of Gethsemane. In some form, they summarize all the ways he and any of us can distort our vocation to be images of God.

Diabolos' insistence that we need to assure our own bread and security diverts our attention from the truth that when anyone is hungry or in danger, not only are all in need, but all have the ability to respond in a way that privileges solidarity over selfishness.

Diabolos' suggestion that religion is meant to be our safety net perverts Christianity, prioritizing self-preservation over self-giving. The appeal to raw power promotes the sham of fear-induced unity and control; it betrays and rejects the ways of the God of love. Most of all, it cannot endure.

As we begin this Lenten season, let us pray that we may recognize and reject the ways we, our church and our society, are continually tempted to betray our vocation to be images of God. Lent is our time to re-appropriate our own baptismal commitment and to confront and expose Diabolos' machinations. In the end, we hope to join Jesus in telling Diabolos: "'Dwell in your hell. We've got a better option.'"

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



listen for wisdom, for what is really good for us as humans? Our senses can attract us to making decisions about what is true living. Listening beyond the information of our senses is a way through temptations to recovery from living under protective "loincloths" of various sizes and strengths.

Matthew's Gospel [4:1-11] is about the power and necessity of listening. Jesus has just heard of His true identity and relationship with His Father in the narrative of His baptism. He has been listening to the implications of this relationship and identity for forty days and nights and is vulnerable to His being tempted. The devil approaches him with the scriptures in hand, challenging Jesus' identity and His relationship with His Father. "If you are the Son of God" is the come-on which the devil invites Jesus into the world of the subjunctive, which all English majors know is the mood of the contrary to fact. Jesus replies with His scriptures handy and shifts the mood to the indicative — which is actually factual. Jesus lived that to which He had been introduced and affirmed in His desert experience. As Adam and Eve did not listen and so were disobedient, Jesus remained obedient and lived this indicative moodiness even to His death.

In this first Week in Lent, we are encouraged to begin listening — or looking at — to what we have been listening to for our identities and our sense of balance. We are invited to listen to the many voices telling us who we are, what is our meaning and value. We are urged during these days of Lent to face the Tempters of our lives who desire our relationships with God to be replaced by illusions and pretenses. We pray to move through "if" to "am" and from "maybe" to "thank You".

We face our temptations joyfully because they become a means of our affirming God's relationship with us and our identities through our having been baptized into His and our being the "Beloved". Jesus heard Who He was and clothed Himself in that identity. Adam and Eve lost their identity and clothed themselves in shame and pretense.

Lent is a powerful time for us to lengthen our relationship with God, self, and others. Lent is an invitation to focus on prayer, fasting, being salt and light for others and taking time to examine any places where we may have fallen away from God. We all have lived through our gardens of temptations. The important thing is whether we have allowed Jesus to minister to us out in the deserts of shame, or recoiled and sewed some kind of fig leaves of false identity with which to hide. As Jesus stayed faithful to His call, His name, His truth, the wonderful blessing is that in doing so He stays faithful to our recreation. "O Happy fault!", Adam and Eve. I forgive you.

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

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — MARCH 18th:

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.



POPE FRANCIS' LENTEN MESSAGE:

Dear brothers and sisters!

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all recount the episode of the Transfiguration of Jesus. There we see the Lord's response to the failure of his disciples to understand him. Shortly before, there had been a real clash between the Master and Simon Peter, who, after professing his faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, rejected his prediction of the passion and the cross. Jesus had firmly rebuked him: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a scandal to me, because you do not think according to God, but according to men!" [Matthew 16:23]. Following this, "six days later, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John his brother and led them away to a high mountain" [see Matthew 17].

The Gospel of the Transfiguration is proclaimed every year on the Second Sunday of Lent. During this liturgical season, the Lord takes us with him to a place apart. While our ordinary commitments compel us to remain in our usual places and our often repetitive and sometimes boring routines, during Lent we are invited to ascend "a high mountain" in the company of Jesus and to live a particular experience of spiritual discipline as God's holy people.

Lenten penance is a commitment, sustained by grace, to overcoming our lack of faith and our resistance to following Jesus on the way of the cross. This is precisely what Peter and the other disciples needed to do. To deepen our knowledge of the Master, to fully understand and embrace the mystery of his salvation, accomplished in total self-giving inspired by love, we must allow ourselves to be taken aside by him and to detach ourselves from mediocrity and vanity. We need to set out on the journey — an uphill path that like a mountain trek, requires effort, sacrifice and concentration. These requisites are also important for the synodal journey to which, as a Church, we are committed to making. We can benefit greatly from reflecting on the relationship between Lenten penance and the synodal experience.

In his "retreat" on Mount Tabor, Jesus takes with him three disciples, chosen to be witnesses of a unique event. He wants that experience of grace to be shared, not solitary, just as our whole life of faith is an experience that is shared. For it is in togetherness that we follow Jesus. Together too, as a pilgrim Church in time, we experience the liturgical year and Lent within it, walking alongside those whom the Lord has placed among us as fellow travelers. Like the ascent of Jesus and the disciples to Mount Tabor, we can say that our Lenten journey is "synodal", since we make it together along the same path, as disciples of the one Master. For we know that Jesus is himself the Way, and therefore, both in the liturgical journey and in the journey of the Synod, the Church does nothing other than enter ever more deeply and fully into the mystery of Christ the Savior.

And so we come to its culmination. The Gospel relates that Jesus "was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light" [Matthew 17:2]. This is the "summit", the goal of the journey. At the end of their ascent, as they stand on the mountain heights with Jesus, the three disciples are given the grace of seeing him in his glory, resplendent in supernatural light. That light did not come from without, but radiated from the Lord himself. The divine beauty of this vision was incomparably greater than all the efforts the disciples had made in the ascent of Tabor. During any strenuous mountain trek, we must keep our eyes firmly fixed on the path; yet the panorama that opens up at the end amazes us and rewards us by its grandeur. So too, the synodal process may often seem arduous, and at times we may become discouraged. Yet what awaits us at the end is undoubtedly something wondrous and amazing, which will help us to understand better God's will and our mission in the service of his kingdom.

The disciples' experience on Mount Tabor was further enriched when, alongside the transfigured Jesus, Moses and Elijah appeared — signifying respectively the Law and the Prophets. The newness of Christ is at the same time the fulfilment of the ancient covenant and promises; it is inseparable from



test. The temptation and how we should resist it are both contained in his reply. In essence, what Jesus says when the devil challenges him to throw himself off the top of the temple to prove his specialness is this: "I'll take the stairs down, just like everyone else!" Our blessedness is not predicated on having a VIP elevator, or on having any special privileges that set us apart from others. We are God's blessed ones, even when we find ourselves riding the city buses.

And it is good to remember, namely, that we are God's special, blessed sons and daughters, even when our lives seem empty, anonymous, and devoid of any special privileges because then we won't forever be putting God and our restless hearts to the test, demanding more than ordinary life can give us.

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, February 4]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-in]-----	\$ 223.38
Offerings-----[Sunday, February 5]-----	\$ 271.00
Offerings-----[Saturday, February 11]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-in]-----	\$ 570.00
Offerings-----[Sunday, February 12]-----	\$ 225.00
Offerings-----[Saturday, February 18]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-in]-----	\$ 570.00
Offerings-----[Sunday, February 19]-----	\$ 295.00
Offerings-----[Wednesday, February 22]-----[Ash Wednesday]-----	\$ 81.00

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].**

PUT TO THE TEST:

Was Jesus really tempted? Doesn't temptation imply a confusion or indecisiveness that seems uncharacteristic of Jesus? Was he really that human? Another question: Why did the Spirit lead Jesus to temptation? Didn't Jesus teach us to beg God not to do that?

In response to the first question, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all clearly say that Jesus experienced temptation in the desert. These three Gospels — called synoptic because they follow a similar pattern — paint a very human portrait of Jesus. John, in contrast, portrays Jesus as keenly aware of his divine origin and destiny.

In addition, the word tempt has two related meanings — to put one to the test, or to manipulate

THE THREE TEMPTATIONS:

Cosmologists today tell us that the universe has no single center. Its center is everywhere, every place, every planet, every city, every species, and every person. But we already know this. Faith tells us that what ultimately defines us and gives us our identity and energy is the image and likeness of God in us. We are God's blessed ones, masters of creation, special to God and special within creation.

And we know this long before religion tells it. Deep down — whether we admit it or not — we each nurse the secret of being special. And this is not just ego or narcissism, but a congenital imprint inside our very souls. Imprinted in the core of our being is the sense that we are not just accidental, anonymous chips of dust, almost invisible on the evolutionary conveyer-belt, destined to flicker for an instant and then disappear forever. We know we are more. We, literally, feel timelessness, eternity, and immortal meaning inside of ourselves.

In our daily lives that often causes more heartaches than it solves. It is not easy to live out our blessed, special status when, most of the time, everything around us belies that we are special. As much as we experience ourselves as special, we also experience emptiness, anonymity, and our ordinariness. And so, it can be easy, in the end, to believe that we aren't special at all, but are precisely small, petty spirits, haunted by over-inflated egos.

We are God's special, blessed sons and daughters, even when our lives seem empty, anonymous, and devoid of any special privileges. But, while over-inflated egos do cause their share of heartaches, it is a still an unhealthy temptation to believe that we are not blessed simply because life finds us one-among-six-billion-others, struggling, and seemingly not special in any way. Faith tells the true story — we are, all of us, made in God's image and likeness, blessed, and our private secret that we are special is in fact the deepest truth.

However, that isn't always easy to believe. Life and circumstance often tire us in ways that tempt us to believe its opposite. It happened to Jesus — He too was tempted, and there was a particular prelude to his vulnerability. During his baptism, he had heard his Father say: "You are my blessed son, in whom I take delight!" [Matthew 3:17]. Those words then formed and defined his self-consciousness. Knowing that he was blessed, Jesus could then look out at the world and say: "Blessed are you when you are poor, and meek, and persecuted" [Matthew 5:1-12].

But throughout his life Jesus struggled to always believe that. For instance, immediately after his baptism, we are told, the spirit drove him into the desert where he fasted for forty days and forty nights — and afterwards "he was hungry." Obviously what scripture is describing here is not simply physical hunger — Jesus was empty in ways that made him vulnerable to believe that he was not God's blessed child. These were his three temptations:

First, the devil tempted him to this effect: "If you are God's specially blessed one, turn these stones into bread." In essence, the devil's taunt was this — "If you believe that you are God's specially blessed creature, why is your life so empty?" Jesus' reply: "One doesn't live on bread alone!" might be rendered: "I can be empty and still be God's blessed one! Being blessed and special is not dependent upon how full or empty my life is at a given moment!"

The second temptation has to do with human glory and its absence. The devil shows Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and says: "All of these will be yours if you worship me!" The taunt is: "If you're God's blessed one, how come you're a big, fat nobody? Not famous, not known, anonymous." And Jesus' reply might be worded this way: "I can be a big nobody and still be God's blessed one. Blessedness doesn't depend upon fame, on being a household name!"

The third temptation follows the same lines. The devil takes Jesus to the top of the temple and challenges him to throw himself down to make God catch him since, in faith, it is promised that God won't let his blessed one "dash his foot against a stone." Jesus responds that we shouldn't put God to the



God's history with his people and discloses its deeper meaning. In a similar way, the synodal journey is rooted in the Church's tradition and at the same time open to newness. Tradition is a source of inspiration for seeking new paths and for avoiding the opposed temptations of immobility and improvised experimentation.

The Lenten journey of penance and the journey of the Synod alike have as their goal a transfiguration — both personal and ecclesial. A transformation that, in both cases, has its model in the Transfiguration of Jesus and is achieved by the grace of his paschal mystery. So that this transfiguration may become a reality in us this year, I would like to propose two "paths" to follow in order to ascend the mountain together with Jesus and, with him, to attain the goal.

The first path has to do with the command that God the Father addresses to the disciples on Mount Tabor as they contemplate Jesus transfigured. The voice from the cloud says: "Listen to him" [Matthew 17:5]. The first proposal, then, is very clear: we need to listen to Jesus. Lent is a time of grace to the extent that we listen to him as he speaks to us. And how does he speak to us? First, in the word of God, which the Church offers us in the liturgy. May that word not fall on deaf ears; if we cannot always attend Mass, let us study its daily biblical readings, even with the help of the internet.

In addition to the Scriptures, the Lord speaks to us through our brothers and sisters, especially in the faces and the stories of those who are in need. Let me say something else, which is quite important for the synodal process: listening to Christ often takes place in listening to our brothers and sisters in the Church. Such mutual listening in some phases is the primary goal, but it remains always indispensable in the method and style of a synodal Church.

On hearing the Father's voice, the disciples "fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Rise, and do not be afraid.' And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone" [Matthew 17:6-8]. Here is the second proposal for this Lent: do not take refuge in a religiosity made up of extraordinary events and dramatic experiences, out of fear of facing reality and its daily struggles, its hardships, and contradictions. The light that Jesus shows the disciples is an anticipation of Easter glory, and that must be the goal of our own journey, as we follow "him alone". Lent leads to Easter: the "retreat" is not an end in itself, but a means of preparing us to experience the Lord's passion and cross with faith, hope and love, and thus to arrive at the resurrection. Also on the synodal journey, when God gives us the grace of certain powerful experiences of communion, we should not imagine that we have arrived — for there too, the Lord repeats to us: "Rise, and do not be afraid". Let us go down, then, to the plain, and may the grace we have experienced strengthen us to be "artisans of synodality" in the ordinary life of our communities.

Dear brothers and sisters, may the Holy Spirit inspire and sustain us this Lent in our ascent with Jesus, so that we may experience his divine splendor and thus, confirmed in faith, persevere in our journey together with him, glory of his people and light of the nations.

—Francis

BEING AT HOME:

Creating space for the other is far from an easy task. It requires hard concentration and articulate work. Indeed, more often than not, rivalry and competition, desire for power and immediate results, impatience and frustration, and most of all, plain fear make their forceful demands and tend to fill every possible empty corner of our life. Empty space tends to create fear. As long as our minds, hearts, and hands are occupied, we can avoid confronting the painful questions to which we never gave much attention and that we do not want to surface..

When we think back to the places where we felt most at home, we quickly see that it was where our hosts gave us the precious freedom to come and go on our own terms and did not claim us for their own needs. Only in a free space can re-creation take place and new life be found. The real host is the one who offers that space where we do not have to be afraid and where we can listen to our own inner voices and find our own personal way of being human. But to be such a host we have to first of all be at home in our own house.

RELATING TO EVIL:

It would be wrong to think that the story of Adam and Eve [Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17, 3:1-7] and the story of Jesus' temptation [Matthew 4:1-11] are simply reporting events that happened in the past. Both of these stories are mythic stories. When we call a story a myth, we are not saying that the story is false, but rather that it is universal. Myths reveal the human condition. They tell us something about ourselves and the way that we live. These two stories today remind us that evil is a part of our lives and that the temptation to do what is wrong is always close at hand. Therefore, as we read and study the Scripture Readings for this 1st Week in Lent, I would like to make one point from each of them which I hope will aid us in the Lenten journey that we begin this week.

The story of Adam and Eve tells us that evil comes to us disguised as good. Our first parents were not tempted to disobey God directly, but instead they were offered a very good thing — a wonderful fruit, a fruit that the text said was good for food, a delight to the eyes, and the bearer of wisdom. It was in Adam and Eve's effort to have this distorted good that sin entered our world. The same is true for us. Evil comes to us as a distorted good. The choices that we make to do what is wrong usually occur because we have convinced ourselves that we are choosing something that is good. What evil does is take good things in our life and twist them, so that instead of being blessings, they in fact do us harm.

A word that conveys this truth about evil is the word "addiction." Usually when we think of addiction, we think of someone under the sway of alcohol or drugs. But the truth is that all of us are addicted to something. We might be addicted to eating or to shopping or to the need to help or make others happy. We might be addicted to the latest thing, the hottest trend, most popular fashion. We might be addicted to our computer, our electronic games, our favorite band, our golf clubs. All of these things are in themselves good. But when we give them control over our lives, when we make them necessary, they rule us instead of bless us.

Now the challenge of Lent is not to stop eating or to throw away our computer or our golf clubs. The challenge of Lent is to allow the good things in our life to find their proper place so that we can free ourselves from the addiction to them. There is only one thing which can occupy the center of our life, that is our relationship to God.

The story of Adam and Eve tells us that evil comes to us in the guise of what is good. The story of Jesus' temptation tells us another truth about evil — we are usually not so much tempted by our weaknesses as by our strengths. The devil knew who Jesus was and what he could do. He used Jesus' gifts to tempt him. He knew Jesus could change stones into bread or protect himself from a disastrous fall, or somehow corral the powers of the kingdoms of the earth. The devil used those very gifts of Jesus to attempt to lead him to sin.

The same is true for us. We are more likely to be tempted by our strengths than by our weaknesses. If we are an industrious, energetic person, that gift can tempt us to the amass excessive wealth. If we are a person gifted with organization and people skills, that gift can become a temptation to power. If we are a person who has a personality that is sensitive and passionate, we can be tempted to sensual pleasure. If we are a person who is intelligent and bright, we can be tempted to arrogance. If we are attractive and good looking, we can be tempted to vanity. What the story of Jesus' temptation tells us is that, as evil approaches us, we should look to our strengths rather than to our weaknesses. For evil takes our gifts, the things that we are good at, and tries to twist them so that instead of helping us and others, they become a poison in our lives.

The two mythic stories in Scripture Readings — the story of Adam and Eve and the story of Jesus'



First Adam

Last Adam

believing in God and asserting that they have wonderful lives without God. And then they write books about the quiet desperation of everyday man. We cannot allow these fools to sway us. We know that we need God. We cannot survive without God. We cannot be happy without Him. And we cannot live forever without Him. "I am a self-made man", the old gent boasted. "Really," the priest responded; "It took God a full day to create Adam, how many days did it take you to create yourself?"

Like Jesus' second temptation, we are tempted to force God into action instead of simply trusting in Him to care for us. We may not be standing on the edge of a building deciding that God must save us if we jump, but we may be toying with that which can destroy us, alcohol, sex, drugs, etc., and think, erroneously, that if we fall God will catch us. We may be living on the edge. It is presumption to think that God will take care of us if we live rejecting the way of life he has given us. God is All-Merciful, true, but He is also All Just. We trust in God, but, as Jesus told the devil, we don't put God to a test. We have to resist the temptation to live life on the edge because if we slip, we fall into eternal death. And like Jesus, we can fight the temptation to be bought by the world. There are many people who have sold their souls for wealth and power. The devil tempts us to join those who do evil, tune down or turn off our consciences, and reap wealth beyond our imaginations. There is a lot of money to be made selling contraband, a lot of money to be made working in the low industries of our society, a lot of money to be made cheating our way to the top of the business world, but we refuse to sell our souls to the devil. We live for One and One only. We live for our Heavenly Father, not for ourselves. The goal of our lives is not to amass a fortune. The goal of our lives is to live for God. We have bought into the Kingdom, not sold our souls to the world, or to the devil, often the same thing.

At the end of Matthew's Gospel, Satan left Jesus, and the angels came to administer to Him. There are angels here. Not just our children, but real spiritual beings. How many are in this building right now? How many angels are in our homes? The angels are our protectors and our spiritual care givers. They will minister to us also as we join the Lord in the fight against evil. We are warriors in the battle of the Lord against the power of the devil. We don't fight alone. The Lord and His forces fight with us.

We ask the Lord today to protect us from the temptations of the world, lead us not into temptation, and to deliver us from evil, the evil one, the evil around us, and the evil within us. And we trust in God for we know that we are loved; for as St. Paul says in the First Letter to the Corinthians, we have been purchased — and at what price? [1 Corinthians 6:20]

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday:	Leviticus 19:1-18, Matthew 25:35-46
Tuesday:	Isaiah 55:10-11, Matthew 6:7-15
Wednesday:	Jonah 3:1-10, Luke 11:29-35
Thursday:	Esther C:12-25, Matthew 7:5-12
Friday:	Ezekiel 18:21-28, Matthew 5:20-26
Saturday:	Deuteronomy 26:16-19, Matthew 5:43-48
2nd Week in Lent:	Genesis 12:1-4, 2 Timothy 1:8-10, Matthew 17:1-9

GRATITUDE:

Giving thanks warms the soul and reminds us that life is an extraordinary privilege. —Matthew Kelly

TEMPTATION:

They had lost their innocence. The first effects of their sin was that their eyes were opened, and they realized that they were naked [Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17, 3:1-7]. Of course, I am speaking about Adam and Eve in the account of the Original Sin. Adam and Eve could no longer be comfortable with themselves. They ate from tree of knowledge of good and evil, and now they had knowledge of evil. In Scripture to know means to experience. Adam and Eve had an experience of evil. It was horrible. They were exposed, vulnerable, full of guilt, full of shame. Their choice of sin was a turning away from the Lord of Life. They chose that which is not life. They chose death. And all humankind suffered the result of their choice. All people would suffer from sin and the result of sin, death.

We experience this suffering every day of our lives, as good people, innocent people, die. We experience this as our children are assaulted by the media, by the immoral aspects of society, by all who would take advantage of them. We experience this as evil grabs people and chokes the joy for life from them. We experience this as we also suffer the results of evil that we have committed as well as suffer from what others have done. Sin makes us all uncomfortable with ourselves.

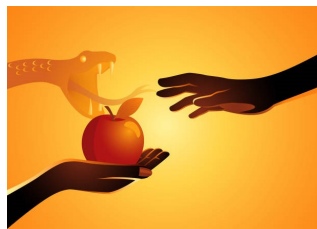
But, St. Paul tells the Romans — and us — just as sin and death came into the world through the actions of one man, Adam, grace and life has come into the world through the actions of another, Jesus Christ. What Christ has brought into the world — His Grace — is infinitely more powerful than the hideous power of sin [Romans 5:12-19].

Jesus first demonstrated His power over evil when He defeated the devil and the diabolical temptations after His forty days in the desert. We can see the beginning petitions of the Lord's Prayer in Jesus' response to the devil. Jesus would seek His bread from God — not from the world. And He taught us also to pray to God for our daily bread. Jesus would seek the will of God and not impose His will upon His Father. He would not jump from the parapet of the Temple as an attempt to force the Father into action. He taught us to pray: "Thy will be done" — not my will, but your will, Loving Father. In the third temptation, Jesus would not be bribed with all the riches of the world, all the kingdoms of the world, given to Him for rebelling against the Father. There is only one Kingdom that mattered. Jesus taught us to pray: "Thy Kingdom come" [Matthew 4:1-11].

We are all tempted to sin. That is part of life. But we can defeat temptation. In some ways we all experience each of the temptations that the devil put before the Lord. The devil wanted Jesus to trust in His own power, rather than the Father. He wanted him to change rocks into bread. We also are tempted to trust in ourselves instead of trust in God. During the colonial and frontier days, Americans established the tradition of rugged individualism that became part of our national identity. But even the early settlers recognized that their strength came from God, not from themselves. I just finished reading David McCullough's book, *The Pioneers*. It's a good read, but McCullough gives little account to the fact that most of the pioneers were people of deep faith — seeking God's protection and love, thanking Him for caring for them in many ways.

We cannot fall for the temptation to think that we can do everything ourselves. We have to trust in God. We have to have faith. Yes, we must do our best to provide for our future that of our loved ones, but, ultimately, we rely on the Lord to care for us. We can resist the temptation to push God out of our lives. This call to faith is not always that easy. In fact, it is usually quite difficult. It is quite difficult to spend so much time and energy on a child, or on a situation, for example a career, and then trust the future to God rather than to ourselves. We do our best to raise our children, but then we entrust them to God. A career opportunity comes up. We pray to God for help. We do our due diligence, make a career choice, and then trust in God.

It is tempting to think that we do not need God. In fact, that is the temptation of the atheistic elements of the world. The so-called intellectual elite often mock people of faith, belittling us for



temptation — both tell us truths about our lives and our relationship to evil. They remind us that evil is close at hand, moving like a snake at our feet. It comes to us in the guise of good and uses our own strengths to tempt us. The challenge of Lent is to recognize this deception and work against it. We must pray for the strength to choose goodness rather than addiction. We must be vigilant that our talents are not used to hurt ourselves or others, but instead that we work to use our gifts to be our best selves and to build the kingdom of God.

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

A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP MILESIC:

As we bring Black History Month to a close, it is imperative to remember that we must respect all human life — from conception through natural death. As Catholic Christians, we know that God created us in his image and likeness; each of us is a unique and beautiful reflection of our creator. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ, yet what we see in the news regularly is division — whether it's based on the color of our skin, our political affiliation, our religious beliefs or other differences that lead to the inhumane treatment of others. We must recall that Jesus prayed just before he died that we might all be one [see John 17]. We also know that united we stand, divided we fall. I'm inviting everyone to reflect on one particularly painful sin of division — racism — and ask that you consider ways to actively reject this insidious evil wherever it is found.

In 2018, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement: *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love — A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*. In that document, the bishops stated: "Racism still profoundly affects our culture, and it has no place in the Christian heart. This evil causes great harm to its victims, and it corrupts the souls of those who harbor it."



The statement went on to say: "What is needed is a genuine conversion of heart, a conversion that will compel change, and the reform of our institutions and society. Moving our nation to a full realization of the promise of liberty, equality and justice for all is even more challenging. However, in Christ we can find the strength and the grace necessary to make that journey."

As you reflect on this, pray this prayer, using these beautiful words from St. John Paul II: "Lord our God, you created the human being, man and woman, in your image and likeness, and you willed the diversity of peoples within the unity of the human family. At times, however, the equality of your sons and daughters has not been acknowledged, and Christians have been guilty of attitudes of rejection and exclusion, consenting to acts of discrimination on the basis of racial and ethnic difference. Forgive us and grant us the grace to heal the wounds still present in your community on account of sin, so that we will all feel ourselves to be your sons and daughters."

We should pray, too, for ourselves, that we will never fail to understand that our power as followers of Jesus comes in our loving one another. We not only pray for victims of the sin of racism, but for all victims of discrimination, violence and abuse, from conception to natural death.

An African American saint in the making is the Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman, who inspired people of all races to work together for the justice that leads to peace. Sister Thea, at a meeting of USCCB in 1989 said: "The Church is a family of families, and the family has got to stay together. If we do stay together, if we walk and talk and work and play and stand together in Jesus' name — we'll be who we say we are — truly Catholic. And we shall overcome — overcome the poverty — overcome the loneliness — overcome the alienation and build together a holy city, a New Jerusalem, a city set apart where they'll know that we are here because we love one another."

May we, as faithful Catholics, lead the way to a vision that Jesus has for this world, where we are all sons and daughters of God, and all brothers and sisters to each other. May we ask the Lord to wash away the ashes of sin in our own hearts, and replace them with the waters of grace — so that we may worship in spirit and in truth, proclaim the Gospel in its beauty, and serve the Lord with gladness.

—Bishop Edward Malesic

WELCOME TO THE DESERT:

God wants for you in your life. Lent is a great time to re-prioritize — “Do not neglect to do good and So here we are — in the midst of another Lent. Another 40 days of no caffeine, cookies, soda, candy, the snooze button, Facebook/Twitter, gossip, video games, complaining, showing up late, secular music, texting, TV, or homework — just kidding — don’t the homework piece; it doesn’t work! There could be a lot of different motivations behind those sacrifices — like a desire to lose weight, or to get attention, but that’s not exactly what Lent is about.

Like a good book, all of Lent builds toward what happens at the end — except that unlike a book, we know what happens at the end of Lent, so we’re able to prepare for it. We look forward to Holy Week, where we enter into Jesus’ Passion and Death, and then celebrate His ultimate victory over sin and death on Easter Sunday.

Some people look at the end and think we should be getting ready with party decorations. What’s with the penance? But we have to remember how we began — Ash Wednesday started us off with ashes as a reminder that in the beginning we were made from dust, and will in the end we will return to dust. Our time here is limited. When we realize that, it provokes us to think about why we’re here and where we’re going.

In Lent we take a step back, and empty ourselves so that we can open our hearts and become more like Christ. Everything we do in Lent is to imitate Christ and grow closer to Him. When we experience the light of Christ, we can see more clearly what we have done and what we have failed to do, in order to have an ongoing conversion.

Let’s recall the fact that there are three main things that we’re encouraged to do during Lent — **fasting, prayer, and almsgiving.**

Why do we fast?

1. **Because Jesus fasted.** Lent is 40 days because Jesus spent 40 days in the desert tempted and fasting and praying before his public ministry began. This wasn’t so that others would think He was super holy — even though He is — and that’s not what it should be about for us either. Jesus was clear about that in Matthew 6:16-18. St. Gregory said: “The difficulty is that there are too many people in the world who seek to be seen as holy, and not enough who truly seek to be holy.”
2. **Because disciplining our bodies, disciplines our souls.** By denying our bodies, we are keeping ourselves from being slaves to our impulses. Our bodies and souls are connected — they can’t be separated. One affects the other. Original sin caused a disharmony that put our bodies and souls at war with each other, so that our bodies rule many of our decisions. Your tummy rumbles — you go eat food; you are tired after lunch and the sun is out — so you take a nap during class. Fasting keeps us from being slaves to every urge in the body, and lets our mind and soul be the master of our actions. Jesus showed us that having self-discipline allows us to follow God in total freedom!
3. **Because suffering finds meaning in Christ.** Jesus taught us that suffering is transformed for our salvation when we enjoy it with His suffering which He endured for our sins. Jesus even said that suffering is necessary for us to get to heaven — “Those who wish to come after me must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me” [Matthew 16:24]. “Just as we need bread, so do we have even more need of God” [Pope Benedict XVI]. If your body is feeling hungry when you are fasting from food, think about what you are doing to your soul when you are not filling it with God.

Why do we pray?

1. **Because fasting without prayer is nothing but a diet.** Lent isn’t a Catholic equivalent to a “new year’s resolution.” It’s not focused on the acts themselves and accomplishing great things. Everything we do is to help us become more united with God. Fasting can help us get rid of distractions so that we can speak and listen clearly when we talk to God in prayer.
2. **Because Jesus prayed.** All the time. He withdrew to pray and communicate with God



every time before going out in ministry somewhere. Part of His reasoning for everything He did on earth was to set an example for us to follow after. St. Paul implores us to “pray without ceasing” [1 Thessalonians 5:17] in order to do the will of God in our lives.

3. **Because sometimes it’s hard to recognize sin.** The closer we get to God in prayer, the more we will be able to see the things of this world that are leading us away from God. When something evil and sinful is brought into the light, you can see it for what it really is, and you will even acquire a distaste for it. Prayer also fills us with hope for what is to come — “Prayer reveals to souls the vanity of earthly goods and pleasures. It fills them with light, strength, and consolation; and gives them a foretaste of the calm bliss of our heavenly home” [St. Rose of Viterbo].
4. **Because prayer keeps us in tune with our relationship with God.** We receive grace through prayer, the gift of God’s divine life. If you want to do God’s will, make sure you aren’t only talking to him when you need something. We need grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to live lives of holiness. Stay close to the shepherd and you will know His voice when He calls your name [see John 10:27]. Always remember that “Prayer is a vital necessity. Proof from the contrary is no less convincing — if we do not allow the Spirit to lead us we fall back into the slavery of sin. How can the Holy Spirit be our life if our heart is far from him?” [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2744].

Why do we give alms?

1. **Because it helps us to be less selfish.** We are hard-wired to think about ourselves first. The best way to counteract this is by building up generosity and empathy in our hearts. Our lives are meant to be poured out for others, through our material goods and all of our gifts and talents. Let this Lent be an opportunity for you to shift the focus from yourself to your brothers and sisters around you.
2. **Because those afflicted with poverty need our help.** If I fast from eating fast food this Lent, it reminds me of those that so often go without food. Praying for the poor is necessary, but it doesn’t put clothes on their back, or food on their plate. What if you took some of the money you would spend going out to eat and donated it?
3. **Because our world is spiritually poor.** Giving alms doesn’t just mean giving food and clothes to the poor — they are a few of what we call the “corporal works of mercy.” We are also called to the “spiritual works of mercy” which include calling our brothers and sisters to a life of holiness and out of a life of sin. “Today, in general, we are very sensitive to the idea of charity and caring about the physical and material well-being of others, but almost completely silent about our spiritual responsibility towards our brothers and sisters” [Pope Benedict XVI]. Since we are both body and soul, our giving must include both. So if we are called to “feed the hungry” that means feeding their souls too — “The world today is hungry not only for bread but hungry for love; hungry to be wanted, to be loved” [Blessed Mother Teresa]. It’s a lot easier to donate food than to confront a friend about something which they are doing that is leading them away from God. But that’s what love is. A few uncomfortable conversations with someone you care about could help get their soul to heaven for eternity! We’re meant to build each other up in the Christian life — “As iron sharpens iron, so we must sharpen humanity” [Proverbs 27:17].

Remember this Lent that you can’t separate prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Try to commit to doing something small in each area and you’ll definitely be closer to God and sainthood. And even though Lent has begun, it is never too late to enter into the journey. Know the profound reality that our sharing in Christ’s suffering is a great gift which leads us more perfectly into communion with Him.

—taken from the writings of Aaron Hostetter, an associate of the Bible Geek

A WAY OF LIFE:

Do not be disturbed by the clamor of the world, which passes like a shadow.” —St. Clare of Assisi