

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer to St. Joseph ~

**Gentle Joseph,
God is captivated
by the
quality of your heart.
Your entire being is
focused on doing his will.
With Mary and Jesus,
you answer the Holy Spirit's call
to build a better world.**

**With one heart,
we join you in saying :
"Here we are, Lord,
your will be done!
Your kingdom come nearer to us!"**

**Keep the hope of a new world
alive in our hearts.
Inspire us to speak words of tenderness
to awaken the love of hearts.**

**May we draw
the energy for our actions
from the source
of all Love
so our faces may shine
with the freedom
of the children of God.
Amen.**

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:
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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.

PENANCE SERVICE:

Our community celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will take place on this **Monday, March 27th at 7:00 PM**. Our service is centered around reflections of the various characters involved in the passion and death of Jesus. There will also be songs and hymns, and a time to bring ourselves from our sinful ways back to the Lord. As we confront our own sinfulness, we realize that we, too, have a part to play in the death of Jesus. The service will last about 45 minutes. There will be a time for individual confessions following the service, for those who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity. Please join us.

**THE FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH:**

On March 19th, the Church celebrates the Feast of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary. This year, however, because March 19th falls on the 4th Sunday of Lent, the feast will be celebrated on Monday, March 20th. Saint Joseph is well known as the head of the Holy Family. He is silent in scripture, yet, spoken words are not needed for us to understand his integrity and godliness. Here is what Pope Benedict XVI says: “The silence of Saint Joseph is given a special emphasis. His silence is steeped in contemplation of the mystery of God in an attitude of total availability to divine desires. It is a silence thanks to which Joseph, in unison with Mary, watches over the Word of God, known through the Sacred Scriptures, continuously comparing it with the events of the life of Jesus — a silence woven of constant prayer, a prayer of blessing of the Lord, of the adoration of His holy will and of unreserved entrustment to his providence. It is no exaggeration to think that it was precisely from his “father” Joseph that Jesus learned how to pray. Let us allow ourselves to be “filled” with Saint Joseph’s silence! In a world that is often too noisy, that encourages neither recollection nor listening to God’s voice.”



The Feast of St. Joseph was celebrated locally as early as the ninth century; it became a universal feast in the 15th century, when it was placed on the liturgical calendar. Pope Pius IX named St. Joseph patron of the universal Church in 1870; he is also the patron saint of carpenters, the dying, and workers.

In 2020, Pope Francis declared a year dedicated to St. Joseph to mark the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being declared patron of the universal Church. It ended in December 2021. In declaring this Year of Joseph, Pope Francis said: “Each of us can discover in Joseph — the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence — an intercessor, a support, and a guide in times of trouble. St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation.”

In the countries of Andora, Bolivia, Honduras, Italy, Liechtenstein, Portugal, and Spain, March 19th is celebrated as Father’s Day

FAITH EDUCATION:

Faith Education meets next on Sunday, April 2nd at 8:45 AM. There are no classes on Sunday, March 12th, March 19th, or March 26th because of Spring Break. As has been our custom in the past, our Faith Education Classes are followed by our 10 AM Mass which is held in the chapel. **If you have any questions, please contact Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560].** Thank you.

**WORDS TO LIVE BY:**

All the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than one single lovely action. —James Lowell

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Susan Vance-Johnson, sister of Chief Advancement Strategy Officer, Ray Murphy, who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.
- 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 Maryann Lucas, aunt of Art Instructor, Susan Southard, who is recovering from open heart surgery
- For Sally Smith, who is recovering from serious kidney surgery.
- For Jackie Rusnik, aunt of Jakub Bennish [‘30], who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Dale Rusnik, uncle of Jakub Bennish [‘30], who is undergoing treatment for various medical issues.
- For Father Diego Irrazaval, C.S.C., who is critically ill following a stroke.
- For Tony Musca [‘84], brother of Kathy Yoakum [‘87] and John Musca [‘90], who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Megan Schaefer Wenker [‘09], who is undergoing treatment for lung cancer.
- For Maria Ruiz, mother of Elina Gurney, grandmother of Joseph and Christina Gurney, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Anna Heryak, Aunt for Mike Heryak, great aunt of Lilian Heryak Tran [‘09], Rosa [‘12] and Edwin [‘17] Heryak, who is under the care of Hospice.
- For Patti Gorman, who is ill.
- For Myron Shibley [‘58], who is in rehab following back surgery.

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Carolyn Barr, mother of David Barr [‘93]
- For Jesus Lázaro Rodríguez, the father of Deacon Ángel Lázaro de la Cruz, C.S.C.
- For Father Ralph Coletta, retired pastor of St. John the Baptist [Akron]
- For Matthew Peterson, father of Landon Peterson [‘21]
- For Sue Heryak, Aunt for Mike Heryak, great aunt of Lilian Heryak Tran [‘09], Rosa [‘12] and Edwin [‘17] Heryak
- For Eloise Finnazzo, grandmother of Marisa [‘16] and Nicci [‘24] Finnazzo.
- For William Logsdon, brother of Father Peter Logsdon, 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.

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PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Ken Matty, who is recovering from surgery.
- 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 care of hospice.
- 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 in rehab following serious surgery.
- For Bill McGinley, father of Chief Academic Officer, Elizabeth Edmondson, and grandfather of Mollie [‘21] and Abby [‘23] Edmondson, who is recovering from health treatment.
- 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 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 Chiacchiarri, mother of Mark [‘94], mother-in-law of Michelle DeBacco [‘96], grandmother of Aurelia [‘28], and Olivia [‘30] Chiacchiarri, 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 — WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22nd:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, March 22nd 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: Meaning of Redemption

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, March 19: 4 th Week in Lent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, March 20: St. Joseph	Check with Office for time
Tuesday, March 21:	Check with Office for time
Wednesday, March 22:	Check with Office for time
Thursday, March 23:	Check with Office for time
Friday, March 24:	Check with Office for time
Saturday, March 25: 5 th Week in Lent	5:00 PM In Person
Sunday, March 26: 5 th Week in Lent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

SCHEDULE OF SPECIAL LENTEN EVENTS & SERVICES:

- **Lenten Communal Penance Service** will be on **Monday, March 27th at 7:00 PM**
- **Mass of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday, April 6th at 7:00 PM.**
- **Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, April 7th at 1:30 PM.**
- **Proclamation of the Passion, Veneration of the Cross and Communion Service on Good Friday, April 7th at 3:00 PM.**
- **Blessing of Easter Foods** will be at **12:00 noon on Saturday, April 8th.**
- **Easter Vigil Service** will be at **8:30 PM on Saturday, April 8th.**
- **Easter Sunday Mass** will be at **10:00 AM on Sunday, April 9th.**



A PRAYER:

Blessed be you, my God, for having created me.

—St. Clare

A REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME:

We prepare for our celebrating the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the Eucharist, by celebrating how through Jesus we have come to see ourselves, others, and all creation as wonderful gifts. Jesus has offered us a new view of life, death and resurrection as well. We have been called and chosen — not because of distinctions, achievements, family lineage, or personal attractiveness. God's love is blind to such plastic categories.

We pray to receive more of the Light, vision, the sight, the sensitivities which Jesus came and comes to share. The problem we have is that we are so familiar with how we have negatively looked at ourselves, others, creation, God, and life itself. We pray to be unblinded and patient in our recovery process.

Our Scripture Readings for this 4th Week in Lent opens with the Prophet, Samuel. Saul, the king and military leader of the Jews has been unfaithful to his mission and disobedient to God's orders. Samuel hears from God that there is to be an impeachment of the King. Saul is told of this and begs for a second chance, but God has other plans.

What we hear is how Samuel hears from God about a Man — Jesse of Bethlehem — who has a fine group of well-bred sons. They are all assembled at a victory/thanksgiving sacrifice. Eliab is presented and Samuel eyes him up and down and finds his appearance manly and worthy of being king. God speaks silently to Samuel about Eliab's not being the right man for the job. God sees into the heart and Samuel is judging through the eyes only.

Jesse presents seven more sons who are similarly dismissed. Jesse is asked if there are any other sons and he replies that there is one other — the youngest — and he is out in the fields tending the sheep. The young man arrives, who is of fine appearance as were his brothers. God prompts Samuel to anoint him. His name is David of Bethlehem who will be entrusted to tend the sheep — the people of Israel. The God who has called him will guide him and be faithful to Israel through him [1 Samuel 16:1,3-7,10-13].

Jesus has declared Himself to be the "Light of the World". For John's readers, day/night, light/dark, and seeing/not-seeing are favorite themes. For those who are visually impaired, John's Gospel is definitely not the text to read for comfort or healing. Rather those who are visually impaired need to read Mark's account of Jesus healing a person who is visually impaired [Mark 10:46-52]; this picture is more hopeful. Instead, John's Gospel is much more about believing [John 9:1-41].

In the Christian Scriptures, the word "believe" in its various forms appears 238 times, 98 of these occur in John's Gospel. A good question might be to ask why the other three Gospels do not push belief as strongly as John. For John, believing is seeing, believing takes place in the light, in the day. So this whole chapter is somewhat of a summation of John's entire Gospel.

The story in John's Gospel begins with a miniature prologue. A man who is blind provokes the question from the apostles about the cause of the man's condition. Did he sin himself, or did the curse of blindness fall upon him because of the sin of his parents? The question reflects the thinking that any physical deformity is a curse because of sin; God punishes when offended. John concludes the prologue by having Jesus state boldly that it is not sin on somebody's part, but this is a situation which will manifest the "works of God" through this man.

It is because of sin though and the darkness of our human unfaithfulness, that Jesus has come into the world as the Light. The stage now is set; there will be rising action and a graceful resolution — the

**SEEING IT RIGHT:**

All the scripture readings for this 4th Week in Lent have something to do with seeing. Those who profess a biblical faith understand that sight is an essential component of that faith. We differ from unbelievers not so much because of the doctrines and dogmas we profess, but because of the way we perceive reality.

Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus perfectly describes that component from a Christian point of view — "Brothers and sisters, you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord" [Ephesians 5:8-14]. It's the ability to see as the risen Jesus sees that "produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth." It alone shows us "what is pleasing to the Lord."

Yet even in the Hebrew Scriptures, people of faith are expected to see differently from others. Samuel's experience provides a classic example [1 Samuel 16:1,3-7,10-13]. The Lord sends Samuel — the last of the judges — to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons the next king of Israel. Saul — the reigning king — has become a terrific disappointment to Samuel and the people. When Samuel originally anointed Saul, he was looking for someone who stood head and shoulders above every other Jewish man — someone who could knock heads with Israel's perennial enemy — the Philistines. No wonder that Samuel is attracted by Eliab's — the eldest of Jesse's sons — "lofty stature." He's another Saul. It's at this point that God reminds Samuel of something all people of faith should presume — "Not as humans see does God see, because we humans see the appearance but God looks into the heart."

Eventually it's David — the runt of Jesse's litter — whom the judge anoints. Samuel's reopened eyes of faith notice something in the boy that his father has overlooked.

In John's gospel, he is not only interested in Jesus giving sight to the man born blind — he's also concerned to demonstrate that the sight that the man receives takes a while to develop. The man's eyes of faith didn't open as suddenly as his physical eyes opened. Notice, when the man's neighbors first ask: "How were your eyes opened?", the man replies: "The man named Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me: 'Go to Siloam and wash.'" At this point, in the man's eyes, Jesus is just a human being like all other human beings.

Later, when the Pharisees question the man about Jesus, the man goes one faith-step further — "He's a prophet." It's only at the end of the story that the man's eyes are completely opened when Jesus asks: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Finally, the man sees Jesus as more than a man, more than a prophet — he then falls down and "worships" Jesus.

John is telling us that it takes time to actually develop our eyes of faith. It's not something we have all at one time. The older we grow in our faith, the more our eyes are able to see what before we overlooked.

For John's Jesus, there is just one way that we can sin by sight. As Jesus tells the unbelieving Pharisees: "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying: 'We see,' so your sin remains." Those who refuse to continually grow in seeing things, people, and situations as Jesus sees them will one day have to answer to their self-imposed blindness.

Perhaps it would be good to memorize and often use the early Christian hymn that ends Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." No one could have said it better. —taken from the writings of Father Roger Karban, which appear on the internet

PROFOUND:

May the love you have in your hearts be shown outwardly in your deeds.

—Saint Clare

SEEING WITH NEW EYES:

Our Scripture readings for this 4th Week in Lent begins about 1,000 years before the time of Christ with God’s surprising choice of the boy David to be Israel’s king. In a society that prized the firstborn, warriors, and wise men, Samuel had to accept and defend God’s untraditional choice of a mere kid to be secretly anointed as successor to Saul [1 Samuel 16:1,3-7,10-13]. The choice of David and the statement that God sees differently than we do is the setup for the story of the healing of the man born blind [John 9:1-41]. Now the core question is: “What are we supposed to see?”

Unlike the Gospel of Mark in which Jesus says little and does much, John’s Gospel offers lots more talk than action — and even the action stories have so many layers of meaning that they read like discourses. This story opens with the statement that Jesus saw a man who had been blind from birth — a malady the disciples understood as a punishment meted out on either the man or his parents. Jesus adjusted their perspective, explaining that God doesn’t see things as human beings do. With a statement that Paul repeated by saying that for those who love God, all things work for good [see Romans 8:28], Jesus points out that the man’s condition would show forth the works of God.

That was Jesus’ subtle foreshadowing of all that was about to follow — He was continuing God’s work of creation. To illustrate that, mimicking the creation of Adam from the river-watered dust [see Genesis 2:6], Jesus made clay to use like chrism on the man’s eyes. Jesus then told him to wash, and that washing opened the man’s eyes.

It’s hard to imagine this fellow’s experience of new sight. Years ago, the movie, *At First Sight*, depicted the agonizing experience of a young man, blind from the age of 3, whose sight was surgically restored. Although he could see, his brain could not decode the images before him. He couldn’t make sense of the world he had learned to navigate by touch and sound. That’s the extreme experience John describes here. It’s a wonderful thing to see, but our newly sighted friend had to totally reorient himself to “live in the light.”

Even as he was reestablishing his identity, the people around him were annoyed. Religious leaders debunked Jesus, asserting that God would never sanction work on the Sabbath. The fellow’s parents were too afraid of repercussions to take a stand on what had happened. In the end, only the fellow himself gave testimony — realizing in the process that nobody wanted to believe that Jesus had done him good. But the man saw one thing clearly — Jesus could not have healed him “if he were not of God.”

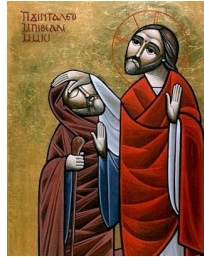
This fellow, nameless so that everyone can recognize themselves in him, knew nothing about Jesus, except that he did him good. As he went through the process of gaining a new perspective and being persecuted for it, he understood ever more clearly that the one who had healed him on the Sabbath was doing the work of God. Jesus had opened his eyes to new dimensions of God’s goodness — and that was what got him into trouble.

After the poor fellow had been questioned, abandoned by his parents, and excommunicated, Jesus found him again. This time, Jesus explained that, unlike the others, the fellow was a successful scrutinizer. When Jesus assured him that he had encountered the “Son of Man,” the man bowed down in worship.

What about us? Baptism — washing, symbolic of death and rising — is our sacrament of reorientation. Unfortunately, many of us who were baptized as infants have learned to protect our inherited perspectives, resisting even miracles if they challenge our comfortable patterns of thinking and acting.

This Sunday, we can’t help but hear this Gospel as an invitation to scrutinize our perspectives, sort through our presuppositions and see what should be discarded and what new insights might be hidden in unexpected, even unwanted places. True, choosing to try to learn God’s perspective will cause great disorientation, but the option is to choose self-imposed blindness.

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



blind will see, [believe] and those who see will find themselves blind [unbelievers].

There are several delightful symbols in this story. “Work” and “light” go together. Jesus as light has come into the darkness of the world to do His thing — which is to present the Father Who sent Him and to do some deeds which will attract attention and a personal response. Jesus spits on the ground and makes a clay eye-patch for the fellow. Clay is the human reality from which we were biblically made. Jesus sends the clay-bound sight-seeker to a pool of water by the name which means, “sent”. We have a wonderful meeting then between Jesus Who is the “One Sent” and the “clay” to whom He has been sent. Through this act of trust, the man came back, “able to see”.

A long section of squabbling ensues among neighbors, Jewish leaders, and even the man’s parents. Eventually the man gets thrown out of the temple which is not an insignificant event. The temple, by the time of John’s writing this Gospel, has been torn down by the Romans as a punishment for the revolt of the Jews. John is presenting Jesus as the new place of God’s revelation. Jesus is the New Covenant who continues God’s covenantal fidelity and history. Upon being expelled, Jesus appears and begins the final act of enlightenment.

“Do you believe in the Son of Man?” This is the real unblinding and central meaning of the whole reading. Here is where we join the story’s action. The man sees Jesus, because Jesus has done some “work”. Have we been un-somethinged, re-visioned, by Jesus? Like the ever-present Pharisees we might be a bit or totally blinded by what we do physically see. There is so much that we do see which causes us to doubt and be blinded to the goodness of God in this world. The Pharisees were blinded by their holding their religious traditions too tightly to their eyes; they didn’t want to see anything different, any new revelationally challenging signs. Sin for John is not doubting, but not believing in Jesus as the One Who has been sent to reveal God’s goodness.

I suspect it would be more interesting to write about some personal experiences of seeing or not seeing. Miracles are exciting to hear about. Those are what we call, “Feel-Good” stories. Believing is not always a “feel-good” experience. When walking in the dark of life, bumping into the doorposts of disappointment, tripping over the unexplainable, walking down the paths of bad choices, all can cause us to curse the darkness of our human understanding. People who are visually impaired often have limited choices, so they learn to receive what they are offered. This is belief then — to receive what God is offering and see the presence of Jesus when we cannot see causes or reasons. Believing is a way of seeing, but we can be blinded by what we have to know, and demand to see.

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

A CONVERTED LIFE:

Living a spiritual life requires a change of heart — a conversion. Such a conversion may be marked by a sudden inner change, or it can take place through a long, quiet process of transformation. But it always involves an inner experience of oneness. We realize that we are in the center, and that from there all that is and all that takes place can be seen and understood as part of the mystery of God’s life with us. Our conflicts and pains, our tasks and promises, our families and friends, our activities and projects, our hopes and aspirations, no longer appear to us a fatiguing variety of things that we can barely keep together, but rather as affirmations and revelations of the new life of the Spirit in us. All the other things which so occupied and preoccupied us, now come as gifts or challenges that strengthen and deepen the new life that we have discovered. This does not mean that the spiritual life makes things easier or takes our struggles and pains away. The lives of Jesus’ disciples clearly show that suffering does not diminish because of conversion. Sometimes it even becomes more intense. But our attention is no longer directed to the “more or less.” What matters is to listen attentively to the Spirit and to go obediently where we are being led, whether to a joyful or a painful place.

Poverty, pain, struggle, anguish, agony, and even inner darkness may continue to be part of our experience. They may even be God’s way of purifying us. But life is no longer boring, resentful, depressing, or lonely because we have come to know that everything that happens is part of our way to the Father.

GAINING OUR SIGHT:

Oil was delivered to a home one winter day. The father, surrounded by his kids, protested that he did not order it. The driver asked: “Do you have oil?” The father said: “no”. “Well,” the driver said, “you’re in luck. Even better, this oil is paid for.” The driver handed over the gift card. It read: “Sent to you by a Christian.” His benefactor was anonymous, but well known to Jesus.

The most famous blind man in history is featured John’s Gospel for this 4th week in Lent [John 9:1-41]. It is a story which unfolds in 3 scenes. The drama opens with wonder and ends in faith. The man formerly blind had no idea his ophthalmologist was the Messiah. In the first scene, the man is summoned by the Grand Inquisitors. In answer to their third degree, the man responds: “the man called Jesus” gave me sight. The man considered Jesus to be extraordinary — nothing more. He might well have applied Shakespeare’s words to Jesus: “His life was gentle and the elements were so mixed in him that nature might stand up and say to all the world, ‘This was a man’ ” [Julius Caesar]. Many atheists are lifelong fans of Jesus. His is the greatest story ever told, and with each telling it gets better and better — Jesus is an amazing guy.

In the second scene, the cured man takes a major step forward — he calls his benefactor a prophet. Such a person is a VIP with God — the man see Jesus as one who knows what’s going down and what’s going on, but the man does not see Jesus as divine.

The curtain goes up on the final scene. The once blind man is about to take a gigantic leap of faith. John’s miracle play is to conclude with all guns booming. The cured man has been rudely expelled from the presence of his inquisitors. They really wanted to lynch him — “Are you trying to teach us?” They consider the man like a piece of trash.

But the Lord of the Temple is waiting for the man. Jesus knew well that the man would be kicked out of His Temple. He starts the dialogue with the question: “Do you believe in the Son of Man [Messiah]?” The man responds: “Sir, tell me who He is so that I may believe.” Christ’s response comes as no surprise to the man — “I am He.” The man declares: “Lord, I believe.” Notice that the man does not call Him “Jesus” now; he calls Him “Lord.” Then the man falls on his knees and worships Jesus. The curtain drops to this centuries old play.

The man placed his belief in the Galilean because he felt compelled to do so. His new eyes told him of Jesus’ divinity. The more one studies Jesus, the greater He becomes.

This miracle tells us much about the Lord. The blind man did not ask for a cure — Christ gave the cure to the man freely. Jesus was touched by the man’s condition. It did not concern the Savior that the man did not know Him from a hole in the wall. Jesus was repelled by the condition of the man’s eyes. His blindness offended Him. He wanted the man to enjoy rainbows, purple and orange sunsets, and wild flowers. If Christ had a calling card, it would read: “If in trouble, call me at 1-800-JESUS.” Christ is one who keeps His heart softer than His head.

And, as Jesus is on call 24/7, so does He wish us to be. He would be delighted if we followed the example of the anonymous donor of oil who we opened this reflection. The benefactor has oil delivered in winter time. A Christian impulse has changed the family’s life. War had been declared on poverty, and this time poverty lost. What had begun as a cold winter developed into a warm one because of a Christian.

Lent is moving along. Into our ears, the Messiah whispers: “Do amaze me in the three weeks left in this Lent with your generosity to my poor. Do it without calling attention to yourself.” The poor are not hard to find. The *New York Times* reports that 16% of US children live in poverty, and 44.3% of all U.S. workers live below the minimum wage.

You may say: “I give away so much already. When do I stop?” The answer is: when Jesus stops



Therese of Lisieux would sometimes pray to God: “Punish me with a kiss!” The embrace of full love is the only true purification for sin because only when we are embraced by love do we actually understand what sin is and, only there are we given the desire, the vision, and the strength to live in love and truth. But that inbreaking of love and light is, all at the same time, delightful and bewildering, ecstatic and unsettling, wonderful and excruciating, euphoric and painful. Indeed, it’s nothing less than purgatory.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: 2 Samuel 16:4-16, Romans 4:13-22, Matthew 1:16-24

Tuesday: Ezekiel 47:1-12, John 5:1-16

Wednesday: Isaiah 49:8-15, John 5:17-30

Thursday: Exodus 32:7-14, John 5:31-47

Friday: Wisdom 2:1-22, John 7:1-30

Saturday: Isaiah 7:10-8:10, Hebrews 10:4-10, Luke 1:26-38

5th Week in Lent: Ezekiel 37:12-14, Romans 8:8-11, John 11:1-45

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — APRIL 15th:

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.

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].



IS THIS WHAT PURGATORY REALLY IS?

Imagine being born blind and living into adulthood without ever having seen light and color. Then, through some miraculous operation, doctors are able to give you sight. What would you feel immediately upon opening your eyes? Wonder? Bewilderment? Ecstasy? Pain? Some combination of all of these?

We now know the answer to that question. This kind of sight-restoring operation has been done, and is being done, and we now have some indication of how a person reacts upon opening his or her eyes and seeing light and color for the first time. What happens might surprise us.

Here is how JZ Young, an authority on brain function, describes what happens: “The patient on opening his eyes gets little or no enjoyment; indeed, he finds the experience painful. He reports only a spinning mass of light and colors. He proves to be quite unable to pick up objects by sight, to recognize what they are, or to name them. He has no conception of space with objects in it, although he knows all about objects and their names by touch. ‘Of course,’ you will say, ‘he must take a little time to learn to recognize them by sight.’ Not a little time, but a very long time — in fact, years. His brain has not been trained in the rules of seeing. We are not conscious that there are any such rules; we think we see, as we say, naturally. But we have in fact learned a whole set of rules during childhood.

Might this be a helpful analogy for what happens to us in what Roman Catholics call purgatory? Could the purification we experience after death be understood in this very way — namely, as an opening of our vision and heart to a light and a love that are so full so as to force upon us the same kind of painful relearning and reconceptualization that have just been described? Might purgatory be understood precisely as being embraced by God in such a way that this warmth and light so dwarf our earthly concepts of love and knowledge that, like a person born blind who is given sight, we have to struggle painfully in the very ecstasy of that light to unlearn and relearn virtually our entire way of thinking and loving? Might purgatory be understood not as God’s absence or some kind of punishment or retribution for sin, but as what happens to us when we are fully embraced, in ecstasy, by God, perfect love and perfect truth?

Indeed, isn’t this what faith, hope, and charity — the three theological virtues — are already trying in this life to move us towards? Isn’t faith a knowing beyond what we can conceptualize? Isn’t hope an anchoring of ourselves in something beyond what we can control and guarantee for ourselves? And isn’t charity a reaching out beyond what affectively feeds us?

St. Paul, in describing our condition on earth, tells us that here, in this life, we see only as “through a mirror, reflecting dimly” but that, after death, we will see “face to face” [see 1 Corinthians 13:12]. Clearly in describing our present condition here on earth he is highlighting a certain blindness, an embryonic darkness, an inability to actually see things as they really are. It is significant to note too that he says this in a context within which he is pointing out that, already now in this life, faith, hope, and charity help lift that blindness.

These are of course only questions — perhaps upsetting to Protestants and Roman Catholics alike. Many Protestants and Evangelicals reject the very concept of purgatory on the grounds that, biblically, there are only two eternal places, heaven and hell. Many Roman Catholics, on the other hand, get anxious whenever purgatory seems to get stripped of its popular conception as a place or state apart from heaven. But purgatory conceived of in this way — as the full opening of our eyes and hearts so as to cause a painful reconceptualization of things — might help make the concept more palatable to Protestants and Evangelicals and help strip the concept of some of its false popular connotations within Roman Catholic piety.

True purgation happens only through love because it is only when we experience love’s true embrace that we can see our sin and drink in, for the first time, the power to move beyond it. Only light dispels darkness and only love casts out sin.



giving to you. Remember poverty never takes a holiday.

—taken from the writings of Father James Gilhooley which appear on the internet

A CARROT, AN EGG, AND A CUP OF COFFEE:

A young woman went to her mother and told her about her life — how things were so hard and she wanted to give up. She did not know how she was going to make it. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed as one problem was solved, another one arose. Her mother took her daughter into the kitchen where she filled three pots with water and put them on the stove to heat. As soon as the water boiled, she placed in the first pot carrots, in the second pot eggs, and in the third pot ground coffee beans. She let them sit and boil without saying a word.

After about twenty minutes, the mother turned off the burners. She took the contents of each and placed them in a bowl. Turning to her daughter, she asked: “Tell me, what do you see?”

“Carrots, eggs and coffee,” the daughter replied.

Her mother then asked her to feel the carrots. “Soft.” said the daughter.

Her mother then asked her to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she found a hard-boiled egg.

Finally, the mother asked the daughter to try the coffee. The daughter smiled as she tasted the rich brew. Then she said: “What does it mean, mother?”

Her mother explained that each of these three items had faced the same adversity, boiling water. However, each reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard, and unrelenting, but came out soft and weak. The fragile egg — its thin shell protecting its inner liquid — came out hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they had been in the boiling water, they had changed the water itself.

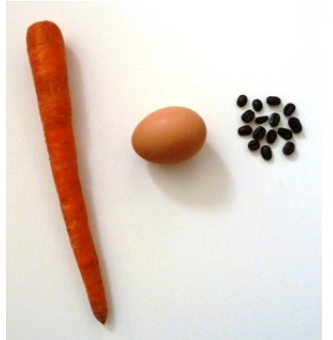
“Which are you?” the mother asked the daughter. “When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg or coffee? Are you the carrot that seems strong but wilts and becomes soft and loses strength? Are you the egg that starts with a malleable heart but changes with the heat — first having a fluid spirit but becoming hardened and stiff? Or, are you the coffee bean that actually changes the circumstances that bring it pain, releasing fragrance and flavor, changing the situation around it?”

“May you have enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human, and enough hope to make you happy. The happiest of people don’t necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the best of everything that comes their way. The brightest future will always be based on a forgotten past; you can’t go forward in life until you let go of your past failures and heartaches. Every death leads to resurrection.”

THERE IS ROOM FOR YOU:

Each perch at the bird feeder was full as I glanced out my window this morning. “Full house”, I thought. “Glad I filled it up! Some restaurants also experience a full house, especially on week ends. “Sorry”, they will say, “reservations are full!”. This can be a discouraging situation, especially if you are planning a celebration. Football stadiums may have a full house for game weekends, though it is referred to as a sell out crowd. Being turned away at the gate can be an disappointing situation.

There is a house which is never full, for there is room for all in this particular one. Jesus said: “There are many rooms in my father’s home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly” [John 14:2]. What a promise!



TAKING THE NEXT STEP:

This is the second of three long narratives from the Gospel of John, which the church assigns for these Sundays of Lent. Like the one we heard last week — The Woman at the Well [John 4:5-42] — the length of these stories allows us to see development in the characters who are in them. John uses these stories to reveal to us what decisions we need to make if we wish to encounter Christ.

John's Gospel for this 4th Week in Lent [John 9:1-41], tells us that if we want to find Christ, we — like the man born blind — must be willing to take the next step. The gospel tells us that God has a plan for our lives, but we do not see that plan all at once. The only way in which that plan can unfold is if we are willing to take the next step as God gives us the light to see it. Look at the man in the gospel. He was blind from birth. What hope could he ever have of being able to see? How easy it would have been for him to wallow in self-pity and hopelessness. How easy it would have been to pass by the next step that God wished to give him. When Jesus said: "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam," how easy it would have been for him to say: "Why? What difference will it make? How can this change anything?" Refusing to comply would be understandable, but the man born blind took the next step. He went, he washed, and he came back able to see.

What John's gospel is telling us is that we must resist the temptation to remain in self-pity and hopelessness. When a step to move is offered to us, we must be willing to take it. We might be convinced that we are unattractive and unlovable, and we will never find anyone with whom to share our life. We might say: "What's the use of asking someone out to a movie or of taking up the offer of a blind date?" But the gospel says to us: if something is offered to you, take it. You might find the love of your life. We might be searching for a job for months without any success, but the gospel says God has a plan, keep following up those leads. The next lead you choose to follow could lead to a job that will give you satisfaction for the rest of your life.

We must be willing to take the next step, and we must be willing to take it more than once. Again, look at the man in the gospel. No sooner did he take the step that allowed him to see, then another step was offered to him — a step for something more. Now he could see physically, but, even before he could absorb that miracle, he was offered a step to believe in Jesus — a step that would allow him to discover the light of the world. Through the debate with his neighbors and the Pharisees, he was posed with a choice, a choice about Jesus. He was asked to decide whether Jesus was a sinner or whether he was from God. How easy it would have been for the man who was once blind to sidestep such a decision. He was now able to see. Was not that enough? Why should he risk doing something more? Why should he stick his neck out and risk offending the authorities? He was able to see, surely there was nothing more than that he needed. How easy it would have been for him to remain in the blessing he had been given, rather than to reach out for the next good thing God wanted to offer. But the man in the gospel took the risk. He accepted Jesus as the one from God. Yes, he found himself in trouble, but he came to see Christ as the light of the world. Had he not taken that next step, he could have continued to see physically, but he would never have seen eternally. For the rest of his life, he could have seen the sky and the trees, but he would not see the face of God.

John's gospel is telling us that even though we are satisfied, comfortable with where we are now, God has a plan for our lives, and God is calling us to more. It reminds us that life is about more than playing it safe. When the next step is offered, we should be willing to take it. God is calling us to new relationships, to new abilities, to new possibilities. The future holds a deeper relationship with God.

The story of the man born blind is a powerful story, for it reminds us that God has a plan for our life. But if we are ever to see that plan, we must be willing to take the next step. Like the man who was born blind, we must have the courage to step out of self-pity and hopelessness. We must have the courage to



the minor part. Jesus was working, but not through them. They focused on the egg sandwich instead of the whole picture of what was taking place. So, these leaders sought some way to discredit what Jesus had done — they condemned Jesus for working on the Sabbath. Even though it was a sign of the presence of the Messiah that sight would be given to the blind, and even though the man's parents testified that he was indeed born blind, the leaders refused to see the presence of God among them. It was the leaders who were truly blind.

John's Gospel presents this intricate little drama as a call for us all to allow the Lord to open our eyes. The Temple leaders and Pharisees were too concerned with themselves to do this. They were not going to have some commoner from Nazareth upset their lifestyle. We are all tempted to do the same thing ourselves. We may be pretty settled in our family when we suddenly realize that our spouse or one of the children has a big problem. For example, it may happen that our spouse, or one of our children is drinking way too much. But it is so easy to close our eyes to this — maybe it will go away. We act as though it is asking too much for us to give of ourselves to solve the problem. We refuse to see the Lord calling out to us in others. We don't see the whole picture — we are blind to God's presence.

As another example, perhaps at work or in school we are confronted with people pushing us to make unchristian choices. We know that we could take a courageous stand and say: "That is just not right" or "That is not my style," but this would make for further conflict. We don't see the whole picture. This is our opportunity to really stand up for Christ. So, instead of making life difficult for ourselves, we go along with the crowd — in conversation, if not also in deed. We end up being blind to God's presence which calls us to give witness to the power of Christ in the world.

God's reality and our human perception of things do not necessarily match. Neither Jesse nor Samuel the prophet thought that the future king of Israel would be the most insignificant of Jesse's sons [1 Samuel 16:1,3-7,10-13]. No one expected the Messiah to be a commoner from Nazareth. When we focus on our perceptions of what God should be like — or how he should act — we miss his presence in our lives. Even in times of sickness, we expect God to heal us, when actually our sickness might be the very way that we draw closer to him. We expect God to solve our problems, when actually these problems help us to keep a perspective on what really is important in life. By demanding how God should act — as the Pharisees did — we become blind to his presence among us.

Pray for the grace in your life to move from darkness into the light.

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

CHAPEL ENVELOPES:

There are many ways that you can support our Holy Cross Mission and support Our Lady Chapel. You can place your offering at the door of the chapel as you enter; you can use our on-line donation link; or you can mail in your offerings to the Chapel itself — whatever best serves your needs. If you need a supply of envelopes, please pick them up off the table in the Narthex of the Chapel when you come to Mass. Or you can call the office or stop in to request them. **If you would like us to send you a supply of envelopes, please call Father John or Patty at [473-3560], and we will get them right out to you..**

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Thank you to those who have begun to send in weekly offerings. We really appreciate it. Thanks for not forgetting about us.

Offerings-----[Saturday, March 11]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-in]----- \$ 850.00

Offerings-----[Sunday, March 12]----- \$ 625.00

NO EXCUSE:

Sometimes we think that we don't hear God's voice because he isn't speaking. But we don't hear him because we have the volume of the world way too loud.

—Mother Teresa.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” I’m sure you recognize these lines as what many consider the greatest opening lines in any novel written in the English language. They are, of course, the first lines of Charles Dickens’ Masterpiece, *A Tale of Two Cities*. The novel contrasted the insanity of the reign of Terror following the French Revolution with the magnanimity of those who reached out beyond their own concerns to care and love for others.

The people who heard or read the beautiful ninth chapter of the Gospel of John — this week’s long Gospel of the Man Born Blind [John 9:1-41] — knew that they were also experiencing the best of times and the worst of times. The Gospel of John was not completed until the end of the first century. By then, Peter and Paul, and all of the other apostles — with the exception of John himself — had all been killed. Many were tortured to death. Even the pagan historian Tacitus wrote that the Christians persecuted under Nero suffered so horribly that many Romans felt a deep compassion for them. And yet, through all the terrors, the people who read John’s Gospel found a deep joy that though they were following Christ to death they were also joining him in eternal life. Christians supported each other, cared for each other, and, above all, held onto their faith. John notes this in the concluding lines of his Gospel — “these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” [John 20:31].

It was the worst of times, yet it was the best of times. The Man Born Blind had experienced the worst of times and was continuing to experience them. He had been born blind; he had never seen his mother and father. There was nothing for him to do in the world except beg — which he did every day by the Pool of Siloam. Perhaps, his parents brought him there every day, with the hope that he might make a little to help pay their bills. Or maybe his parents had put him out of the house once he reached a certain age. The man lived in a dark world.

Then Jesus came and healed the man. He gave him sight. Yet, in the midst of this moment a joy, a dark cloud overshadowed him — the man was attacked by the Pharisees for daring to say that this Jesus was a prophet. He was thrown out of the Temple, and shunned by society. The man did not need the Temple any more; nor did he need society — he had Jesus. As the drama progresses he grows in faith until at the end he worships Jesus. He was living in the best of times.



Throughout our lives we all struggle through times of darkness, grasping for light. When will the darkness be over? When will we see the light at the end of the tunnel. Well, we do not know when our struggles will come to an end; but we do know this: we can already see the light. Perhaps we are caring for a loved one who is lingering on in a slow death. Or maybe we are going from one crisis to another, and wondering if we will ever see light again. We will. We will because the light is there for us. That light is the light of the Lord.

Just before this miracle of the blind man, Jesus calls out: “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life” [John 8:12]. Jesus is not just setting the scene for the drama of the Man Born Blind — He is speaking directly to us, to you and to me. He is telling us to put our trust in Him, to rest in him, and to know that no matter what happens in this world, good or bad, positive or negative, we will always enjoy the Light of Life. We pray today for all who are suffering. We pray that they and all of us can recognize that Jesus provides us with the Light to guide us through the worst of times to the best of times.

There is another very interesting thing going on in this story. And that is the leaders — the Pharisees. The Pharisees missed the fact that God was indeed working — they were more concerned with

step out of comfort and the status quo. We are always free to sit down where we are right now and say: “This is it. I will go no further.” But the gospel warns against that stagnation. It tells us that Jesus is leading us forward, inviting us to move into the future. Jesus is calling us so that step by step we may come to see him face to face.

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

THE COMMON MAN:

Why do you think that God chose David to be a King of Israel in place of Saul? [1 Samuel 16:1,3-7,10-13]. One criteria seems to be an open heart; God looks at hearts; and a plan of God towards him. God executes his plan even though He knows that this man would try to disrupt his plans with sins in the future. God decides to act, choosing David as king, knowing that upon David’s direction — and later on his son Solomon — the Kingdom of Israel would become strong as a faith-people.



God will do it, using David’s freedom, and especially when he is open to God’s ways, because this is the only way God could introduce on the earth law, justice, and truth. The openness to the acts of God, entering into the world and receiving his message, St. Paul calls entering a “light”. It opposes a “darkness” which is closing himself and separating from God.

The criterion is a phenomenon of Jesus Christ to whom we have access by faith. In short, being in light means walking in the paths of God, in freedom and in the direction of spreading the goodness. Being in darkness means walking in sin and in ignorance about salvation.

John’s Gospel is an evangelical example of this thought [John 9:1-41] — a man blind since birth is cured through an undeserved action of Jesus Christ. This man represents each of us, who through faith in Christ, receives a gift of vision of the God’s plans, so he could walk in light and avoid sin.

—taken from the writings of Father Richard Gron, which appear on the internet.

COMING TO KNOW GOD:

When have I glimpsed God in a way that brought my understanding to a new level? I’ve not had an experience similar to the disciples seeing Jesus transfigured. But I glimpse the reality and glory of God when something speaks to that deep place in myself — the place where I recognize truth, where I know that I know something wonderful. Sometimes the truth seems to vibrate and sing to me when I read a poem or a line from a novel or essay or the Scriptures. I take in the word or phrase, and it becomes alive in me. That moment becomes part of the long, long string of moments in which the Holy Spirit speaks to my spirit in a way that cannot be denied. Thus, the string of moments develops into an ever-growing memory of faith.

I’m a word person, so it makes sense that I glimpse the Divine through words. But God appears to each person in a way he or she will recognize and relate to.



—Vinita Hampton Wright

LIFE TEEN and EDGE:

Our Life Teen and EDGE youth group is meeting in-person again. We will meet for an hour beginning at 11:30 AM following our 10 AM Sunday Mass in the Lennon Board Room. If you are unable to join us, there are many resources available for you on the Life Teen website — lifeteen.com. There are numerous blogs and videos for you to connect with. The Life Teen national office continues to release many new programs. **Please contact Father John for more information. And please join us each Sunday for our Mass at 10 AM — in person or live-streamed, and then come to our Life Teen/EDGE gathering after Mass.** And above all, let us continue to join each other in prayer. **Father John is available for you. Please contact him [cell: 216-570-9276].**



LIFE TEEN

CONFESSION 201 — HOW TO CONFESS LIKE AN ADULT

For most of us, instruction in going to confession took place in the second grade, right before First Holy Communion. We were taught how to confess like children and most of us have never received any further instruction. So we still think in terms of “I disobeyed Mommy, I pulled the dog’s tail, and I fought with Jimmy in the schoolyard.”

The problem with our second-grade education is that we don’t know how to make a good confession when we’re not really being naughty. So when we don’t have anything obvious to say, we don’t know what to say, and we wonder if we should even go to confession.

Maybe some of you can relate to my frustration at confessing the same-old-same-old stuff for a number of years and feeling like I’m just not progressing. I figured I must be doing something wrong, so I decided to do some research to learn how to make a grown-up confession.

What I’ve gathered is that, basically, making a good confession when you’re not obviously breaking the Ten Commandments is hard. It takes work. But putting in that work is what propels the soul to the next level of spiritual growth.

Step 1: Change Focus. The first step is to have the right intention. Everything should stem from our relationship with Christ and our desire to grow closer to him. As Fr. Mike Schmitz asks us: “Is God the center of your life? If not, you should confess that first.” My goal should be to unite more fully with the Blessed Trinity — to grow in grace, which, as we learned in second grade, is “the life of God in our souls.” It is grace, God’s life in us, that makes us holy.

So, do I really want to be holier or do I just want to be nicer? There is a critical difference in motives between the two. The former focuses on God and what God thinks of me, while the latter focuses on me and what people think of me. Holiness focuses on the one eternal relationship; niceness focuses on temporary, earthly relationships.

When my life’s focus is on growing deeply in love with God, then I will see myself and the path I need to take more clearly.

Step 2: Understand the True Meaning of Sin. Having homeschooled six children using the *Baltimore Catechism*, and having drilled them over and over, I have it pretty much memorized. Our second-grade lessons taught us that sin is “any willful thought, word, action, or omission contrary to the will of God.” But Fr. Mike, in his down-to-earth way, defines sin this way: “God, I know what you want, but I want what I want.”

So if we understand sin as rejecting God, and we are truly seeking to grow in relationship with him — see step 1 — then we will want what he wants, even in the smallest aspects of our lives.

Step 3: Examine Your Conscience Like a Grown-Up.

The good old *Baltimore Catechism* taught us that the steps to confession are: Find out my sins; be sorry for my sins; make up my mind not to sin again; tell my sins to the priest; do the penance the priest gives me. That’s still the right order — even for adults. But “find out my sins” means to examine one’s conscience. The key here, I’ve found, is to habitually examine one’s conscience — not just right before confession. Ideally, we should do an examination of conscience every night before bed. Ask for the Holy Spirit to help you as you go back over your day, first reviewing all the ways you said “yes” to God and thanking him, then reviewing all the ways you said no to God and asking forgiveness. Mother Teresa said it simply: “Ask at night before you go to bed: ‘What did I do to Jesus today? What did I do for Jesus today? What did I do with Jesus today?’”

Using a cheat sheet on a regular basis can deepen and improve your nightly review as well as your examination immediately before confession. There are so many to choose from! Find what works best



for you in your state in life and the issues you’re struggling with. Common suggestions are the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the Precepts of the Church, but you can also use a prayer like the Litany of Humility. Also Father Mark-Mary has a beautiful video on *Bringing the Same Sins to Confession*. or the beautiful prayer Fr. Mark-Mary offers in his video, Bringing the Same Sins to Confession?

Also there are other helps to help you reflect and examine your spiritual condition. Each offers descriptions and attributes of various theological lists to meditate on — the Seven Deadly Sins, Seven Capital Virtues, Three Theological Virtues, Four Cardinal Virtues, and even the Four Temperaments [personalities] and the strengths and weaknesses associated with them.

Step 4: Be More than Just Sorry. The next step after examining one’s conscience is to be sorry for our sins, or as one source said: “be heartbroken because of your sins.” Heartbroken. Yes, if I truly loved Jesus, I would be heartbroken that I had hurt him! If we are truly heartbroken, we should be able to “make a firm resolve not to repeat our sin.” This is true repentance.

Each of us needs to actually, formally renounce the sin. As Christians, we are not confessing just to get some Catholic guilt off our chests. We’re confessing so that we will have a true conversion, a real change of thinking and change of lifestyle.

Step 5: Confess Like an Adult. If our motive is to grow in love with the Lord, if we understand what sin is so that we can habitually examine our consciences and see ourselves more clearly, if we are heartbroken and truly repentant, then we are ready to go to confession as grown-ups — and actually start to see some results!

Confessing like an adult begins with acknowledging that confession is not about me — it’s about God. It’s about acknowledging that I am weak and imperfect and that I can’t do this on my own — I need God’s grace, help and direction. Here’s a litany that each of us should pray every day. It is written by Brother Isaiah, CFR:

- From the tendency to self-reliance, deliver me O Lord
 - From a fear of asking for help, deliver me O Lord
 - From a doubt in your providence, deliver me O Lord
 - From a doubt that you are a good Father, deliver me O Lord
 - From the tendency to believe that my weakness will define me, deliver me O Lord
 - From discouragement, deliver me O Lord
 - From despair, deliver me O Lord
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- With a confidence in your fatherhood—that you are a good father—strengthen me, O Lord.
 - With a trust in your guidance and your providence, strengthen me, O Lord.
 - With a zeal for virtue and growth, strengthen me, O Lord.
 - With hope that I can with your help succeed, strengthen me, O Lord.
 - With the confidence and the courage to ask for help, strengthen me, O Lord.
 - With an ear that is attuned to your voice, strengthen me, O Lord.

Confessions isn’t about a list—it’s about letting God embrace us in our brokenness.

—edited from the writings of Jeannette Williams and Father Mark-Mary, CFR, which appear on the internet

A FACT:

You are loved just for being who you are, just for existing. You don’t have to do anything to earn it... No one can take this love away from you, and it will always be here.

—Ram Dass