

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

~ Prayer for a Blessing on One's Work ~

O Lord, my God,  
Creator and Ruler of the universe,  
it is Your Will  
that human beings  
accept the duty of work.  
May the work I do  
bring growth in this life to me  
and those I love  
and help to extend the Kingdom of Christ.

Give all persons work  
that draws them to You  
and to each other  
in cheerful service.  
I unite all my work  
with the Sacrifice of Jesus  
that it may be pleasing to You  
and give You glory.

I beg Your Blessing  
upon all my efforts.  
With Saint Joseph  
as my example and guide,  
help me to do the work  
You have asked  
and come to the reward  
You have prepared.  
Amen

**CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:**

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.  
phone: [440] 473-3560 [office] or 216-570-9276 [cell].  
e-mail: blazekj@gilmour.org

# Our Lady Chapel



*Our Lady Chapel is a Roman Catholic community founded in the love of the Father, centered in Christ, and rooted in the Holy Cross tenets of building family and embracing diversity. We are united in our journey of faith through prayer and sacrament, and we seek growth through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in liturgy and outreach, while responding to the needs of humanity.*

**ENTRANCE TO THE CHAPEL:**

Due to the construction around the Commons, the entrance by Fr. John's office [double white doors] has been closed to all traffic. **Please enter the Chapel and/or offices at the main front entrance by the Shrine, ONLY!** Thank you.

**LABOR DAY:**

On **Monday, September 4<sup>th</sup>**, we take time to celebrate the final holiday of the summer — **Labor Day**. Besides reflecting on summer, the holiday, by its very title, invites us to reflect upon the contributions that each person makes toward the building of the human family. All of us are called by God to continue to participate in the work of creation. Each of us, because of our baptism, is called to bring to life, through our talents and energies, to that small piece of God's kingdom on earth. **Mass will be celebrated at 9:30 AM on Monday, September 4<sup>th</sup>**. We would be honored if you and your family will join us.

**FAITH EDUCATION:**

**Faith Education will begin shortly. With that in mind, it is very important that you register your child early** so that we will know how many teachers we will be needing. **Even if your child attended class in the past, because we are restructuring our program, you will need to register.** Our Faith Education classes for the year will begin on **Sunday, October 1<sup>st</sup> at 8:45 AM**. Please join us as we come together to begin our faith journey for this year by entering into prayer and worship together. **If you have any questions, please contact Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560].** Thank you for taking care of this important

**THE PROPHETIC CALL TO LIFE:**

At the center of the prophets' ministry is their awareness of the transcendent God who is above all things and yet within all things. God's presence cuts across all boundaries of space and time, and there is never any place or event from which God is absent. The prophets' consciousness was filled with that awareness of God's presence, a presence which was inescapable once they became attuned to it.

What God was doing in their heart was loving them to life. God was loving them, calling them, and drawing them to God's own heart. God had loved Israel to life when they were still enslaved. God invited them to life when God gave them the Torah to follow. God drew them to life when they had given up on life, in exile.

God's call to life was, at the same time, a call to love. Drawn into the love of God, the prophets loved God with all their heart and soul. They loved their own people and with clear insight saw that living in the love that is God implies hospitality to strangers, charity to the poor, justice for the oppressed.

The biblical text mirrors our own human consciousness and journey. Life itself — and the Scriptures, including the prophets — is always three steps forward and two steps backward. It gets the point and then loses it or doubts it. Our job is to see where the three-steps-forward texts are heading — invariably toward mercy, forgiveness, inclusion, nonviolence, and trust.

The amazing thing about the prophets' message is that it's so simple. When we first read through the prophetic books of the Bible, it looks like we are taking two steps backward: pages and pages of prophecies about this, that, and the other thing. The prophets rail against idol worship and speak about death and destruction. But when we read the prophets again and again, we are struck by their "three steps forward" direction of justice, mercy, consolation, and love. We begin to see the central insight which arranges the parts into a single whole. The insight is the love of God, experienced and lived.

The experience of God's love is an experience of grace, overwhelming beauty, and unbelievable mercy. It is a gift of forgiveness, approval, and acceptance. To live in that love means to live in grace, to be gracious and merciful to others. It means extending to them forgiveness and approval and acceptance.

—Richard Rohr, O.F.M.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For Paula Sieminski, mother of Andrew Sieminski ['18], who is undergoing treatment for cancer
- For Nora Beach, wife of Gilmour Religion Instructor, Bob Beach, mother of Hannah ['98] and Miriam ['99] Beach, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Denise Shade, wife of Loren Shade, mother of Michael, Madeline, and Charles Shade, who is recovering from an injury incurred in an accident.
- For Sister Mary Ann Lavelle, C.S.J., sister of Brother Robert Lavelle, C.S.C., who is critically ill following a fall.

**FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Vince Lauricella, cousin of Lorraine Dodero, 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin to Corrine Salvatore ['02]
- For Francis Brady ['64]
- For Mary Catherine O'Hara, sister-in-law of Father Tom O'Hara, C.S.C.
- For Father Lawrence Martello, pastor emeritus of St. Joseph Parish in Amherst
- For Robert Seng ['62]
- For Walter Knebusch
- For George Prusock, husband of LS long-time office Associate, Nina Prusock.
- For Jean Hogan, mother of Nick Hogan ['87]
- For Sister John Paul Bobak, S.N.D.
- For Leo McGuire

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

- For the victims of the fires in Maui, and Hurricane, Idalia.
- 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.

**TRAVELING TOGETHER:**

Prayer is the medicine for faith, it is a tonic for the soul. However, it needs to be constant prayer. If we must undergo a treatment to get better, it is important to follow it well, to take the medicine consistently and regularly in the right way and at the right times. This is necessary in all of life. Let us think of a houseplant: we have to water it consistently every day. We cannot soak it and then leave it without water for weeks! Even more so with prayer. We cannot live only on strong moments of prayer or occasional intense encounters, and then "go into hibernation". Our faith will dry up. We need the daily water of prayer, we need time dedicated to God, so that he can enter into our time, into our lives; consistent moments in which we open our hearts to him so that he can daily pour out on us love, peace, joy, strength, hope, thus nourishing our faith.



—Pope Francis

**THE MIRACLE OF LIFE:**

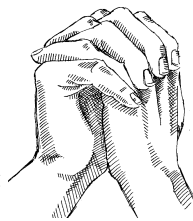
We will only understand the miracle of life fully when we allow the unexpected to happen. —Paulo Coelho

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For Tim LaGanke, grandfather of Casey Lennon [\*30], who is critically ill with Lymphoma.
- For Beth Budaji, mother of Kate Budaji Mckay [\*06], who is seriously ill.
- For Brother Robert Dailey, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jennifer Burger [\*06], sister of Rachel [\*10] and Paul [\*16] Burger, who is undergoing treatment for rare form of breast cancer.
- For Sister Grace Corbett, S.N.D., who is under the care of hospice.
- For Megan Schaefer Wenker [\*09], who is critically ill with cancer.
- For Gia Cefferati, aunt of Rylyn [\*23] and Jackson [\*25] Anderson, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Carl Grassi, father of US Science instructor, Jessica Simonetta [\*05] and grandfather of Clare Simonetta [\*39], who continues to recover from open heart surgery.
- For Kevin Kennedy, who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic and lung cancer.
- For Maria Ruiz, mother of Elina Gurney, grandmother of Joseph and Christina Gurney, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Susan Vance-Johnson, sister of Chief Advancement Strategy Officer, Ray Murphy, who is undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer.
- 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 continues in rehab following serious surgery.
- For Paula Smith, mother of Tyler [\*10] and Alec [\*13] Smith, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- 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 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 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 Michael Nestor [\*98], who is undergoing treatment for a rare form of cancer.
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian [\*09], Rosa [\*12] and Edwin [\*17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- For Miguel Valdehita, who is undergoing treatment for Covid.
- For Joe Bucar, housekeeping employee, who is undergoing treatment for Parkinson's Disease
- For Frank Cunningham, who is under the care of hospice
- For Jim Milan, nephew of Father Jim Foster, C.S.C., who is critically ill as a result of an accident.
- For Kathy Hudak, aunt of Brother John Draves, C.S.C., who is critically ill following a brain aneurysm
- For John Roddy, brother of Tim Roddy [\*87], brother of Gilmour Marketing associate, Mary Roddy Stretar, and cousin of Daniel [\*83], Mike [\*85], and Matt [\*86] Roddy, who is undergoing treatment for a recurrence of cancer.
- For Sue Ryavec, mother of Ron Ryavec [\*16], who is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.
- For Susan Locke, who is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.
- For Jerry Baum, who is undergoing treatment for an aggressive form of leukemia..



**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6<sup>th</sup>:**

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



**Our topic: Angels**

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

**SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:**

Sunday, September 3: 22 <sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, September 4: Labor Day	9:30 AM In Person & Live Stream
Tuesday, September 5:	NO MASS
Wednesday, September 6:	NO MASS
Thursday, September 7:	NO MASS
Friday, September 8: Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary	NO MASS
Saturday, September 9: 23 <sup>rd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, September 10: 23 <sup>rd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — SEPTEMBER 19<sup>th</sup>:**

Our Savior Lutheran Church, across the street from Gilmour, has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on the **third Saturday of each month.** They welcome volunteers. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help setting up items for distribution and preparing for the food pantry to open. It serves around 150 clients each time. 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 us know in the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you would like more information or if you would like to help.** This is a wonderful way to serve others Please consider this opportunity.

**REFLECTION FOR THE WEEK:**

Our Scripture Readings for this 22<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time offer us some difficult challenges. We are asked to offer ourselves as “living sacrifice” [Romans 12:1-2] and “deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow in my footsteps” [Matthew 16:21-27].

Sometimes I think that disciples had such an advantage over us. They were able to walk and talk with Jesus; they were able to see the miracles firsthand — the sea stilled, the scraps feeding the mobs with leftovers, the blind being able to see and the cripple walking. Yet so many times, they don’t see to “get it.” Yet, if you really stop to think about what it was like in their situation, we realize that some of what they were hearing may have been well beyond their comprehension. Perhaps it was even more difficult for them than us. We, at least, have a more complete picture — and, yet, we still don’t get it! But in order to truly understand this, we need to try to imagine what it would be like walking beside Jesus and hearing these predictions of the future without the framework that we now have.

Being faithful to God is much more than keeping rules and doing the “holy” things of life. Being faithful to God has much to do with being faithful to the fact that we are created...and God is not. This is our true identity — and this involves living with the tensions which come from opposition.

Christ is in the midst of his faithful journey toward His cross and the self-surrendering act of His death. We walk toward our own final surrender to our being limited creatures. We acknowledge how easy personal infidelities are. Life has many crosses, but the heaviest is that one of our being grateful and accepting of our God-given, God-blessed selves.

Jeremiah had a very special, yet difficult, mission. He has been given the charge of confronting the people — especially the religious leaders of Jerusalem. He is asked to buy an earthenware jug and break it in the presence of the people. Jeremiah then tells the leaders that God intends to smash Israel like the jug because they have profaned the sacredness of the lands and their hearts [see Jeremiah 19].

The priest of the temple — Pashur, who is chief of the temple police — has Jeremiah put in prison and chained for punishment — and perhaps for silence. Jeremiah is released the next day by Pashur, but instead of being grateful, Jeremiah dumps some hard prophetic words on Pashur — God is going to strike terror into Pashur’s heart and the hearts of his friends. One would think that Jeremiah has said enough, but then he predicts the whole downfall of Jerusalem as well.

This, then, is the backdrop of Jeremiah’s prayer or conversation with God. While Jeremiah admits that some good has come out of this, the reality is that he is lonely and feels abandoned. Yet, even in all of this, Jeremiah showed up for his time and part in God’s work of redemption [Jeremiah 20:7-9].

Jesus has just finished the conversation that he had with Peter — “who do you say that I am?” [see Matthew 16]. After Peter is affirmed for his response, the conversation between Jesus and his disciples takes an unexpected turn. Jesus is presenting His friends with the real meaning of what it is going to mean to be the Christ and the Son of God. Jesus uses this tense moment to say that He has to suffer and die. There is a deep reality to Jesus’ being the Christ — and a deeper reality of the disciples’ being followers of the Christ. Jesus invites them to follow Him by their being faithful to their relationship with Him which has made them who they are [Matthew 16:21-27]. “Losing” and “gaining”, “saving” and “finding” are powerful words which get the attention of the disciples — and us.

But everything that Jesus says seems to hang on one word — “conduct”. What is this “conduct” about? Conduct is more than just doing the right things at all times. It isn’t about “God watching”. This is all external. What Jesus is asking of the disciples and of us is a more interior following of Him — Jesus lived as He interiorly knew Himself to be. His “Cross” was more than the wood of Calvary, but the flesh and spirit, the history and destiny of His whole life. He was His Cross! He was who He had heard

**BE IN FOR THE LONG HAUL:**

The late Carrol Stuhlmüller once mentioned in class that the Hebrew word rendered as “duped” by the prophet Jeremiah really means “rape” when used in other places of the Hebrew Scriptures. Given the fact that Jeremiah goes on to say: “you were too strong for me, and you triumphed,” seems to be what the prophet is accusing God of doing to him. No wonder our modern translators watered down the word. We’re accustomed to regarding God as our Redeemer, our Savior, not as our Rapist. Yet, as blasphemous as it is, that seems to be exactly how Jeremiah looks at his relationship with God [Jeremiah 20:7-9].

When, as a child, I began walking to school alone, my mother frequently warned me never to get into a car with a stranger. Only much later did I understand that she wasn’t worried about the stranger’s reckless driving record — she feared something much worse. Today Jeremiah confesses: Years ago, I didn’t listen to my mother. I got into a car with the Lord, and I’m still suffering the consequences. The prophet is very concrete: “I am an object of laughter; everyone mocks me; the word of the Lord has brought me derision and reproach all the day.”

Even worse, Jeremiah can’t tell God: “Take this job and . . .” It’s as though he’s joined the mafia; there’s no way he can get out of it — “I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more. But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones; I grow weary holding it in, I cannot endure it.” He’s trapped! He’s going to have to be a prophet — with all the pain that entails — till the day he dies.

Jesus of Nazareth’s earliest followers could identify with Jeremiah on all sorts of levels. Though, unlike this 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE prophet, they can fall back on a belief in an afterlife which eventually levels the faith playing-field, it doesn’t take long for them to discover their relationship with this itinerant preacher brings lots of suffering. That’s why immediately after Matthew has Peter declare that Jesus is the “Messiah, the Son of the Living God,” this divine Christ informs his followers “that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly, be killed and on the third day be raised.” Peter hadn’t planned on that kind of salvation [Matthew 16:21-27].

It’s bad enough that this Galilean carpenter will have to undergo such pain, but it’s even worse that he expects his followers to endure the same suffering. They, like Jesus, will have to carry their “tau” — be totally open to whatever God wants them to do. Only those who are willing to lose their lives will eventually gain the life Jesus experiences and promises. It’s as though God’s fighting against God.

Even before Matthew wrote his gospel, Paul of Tarsus discovered that same dying/rising reality. It comes with the territory. In his letter to the Church at Rome, Paul reminds the Christian community that unless they “offer” their bodies as a living sacrifice, they’ll never achieve the life the risen Jesus has achieved [Romans 12:1-2].

When *Peanuts*’ Charlie Brown once mentioned to Lucy that “Life’s a matter of ups and downs,” Lucy immediately countered with, “I don’t want any downs! I just want to go up, up, up!” I presume each of us can identify with Lucy. Yet at the same time we’re trying to imitate someone who constantly tried to “discern what is the will of God.”

Jesus not only got into the car with his Father — he holds the door open for us to jump in with him.

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

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:**

Father John is available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you.

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



God” — utter awe at God's greatness and compassion — allowed for the expression of deep passion. Remember Abraham? Questioning God took him to the threshold where God could make a promise greater than Abraham would have imagined [see Genesis 15:1-6]. Then we have Moses, who tried to avoid confronting the Egyptians by claiming a speech impediment; God reminded him of who gave humans the power of speech and then promised the human help he needed to do what he was called to do [see Exodus 4:10-17].

When we hear Jeremiah cry: “You duped me” [Jeremiah 20:7-9], our translation has made his complaint polite, washing out its passion. A translation truer to what Jeremiah said is: “You seduced me, Lord, and I let myself be seduced.” Once again, we seem to be treading toward blasphemy, right? But listen as Jeremiah continues to pray: “I want to quit this ministry, but your word is like a fire in my heart. When I try to hold it in, it explodes inside me. I can't withstand it! It's about to break my bones!” Now that's a lesson in praying with passion!

What had happened to Jeremiah was that he received a new perspective. God enticed him into a mindset and course of action that he didn't want, but couldn't refuse. This is what Paul tries to encourage in the Romans as he says: “Don't conform to this age. Let yourself be transformed to learn what is really good and pleasing and perfect” [Romans 12:1-2]. Now, if you think we've drifted out of passion and into pious platitudes, you're missing the point.

Matthew's Gospel invites us to enter into the Christian adventure with countercultural passion. After Peter's proclamation of faith, Jesus tells the disciples that being the Messiah is not what they would like to imagine. In response, moments after proclaiming unconditional faith, Peter became Jesus' tempter. Echoing the devil who urged Jesus to use his power for himself and make God his security blanket [see Matthew 4:1-10], Peter reproached Jesus for talking about suffering. Echoing his words to the devil himself, Jesus told Peter to get behind him. Yet, Jesus' approach to Peter was not really a dismissal. Using the same vocabulary he had used when he first invited Peter to discipleship, Jesus told Peter: “You are to follow me, not vice versa” [Matthew 16:21-27].

With that, Jesus offered Peter the divine seduction — “Those who wish to save their lives” — in other words, “Focusing on your own safety is a vicious circle — you'll never have enough of it. If you are free enough to give yourself, nobody can threaten you ever again.”

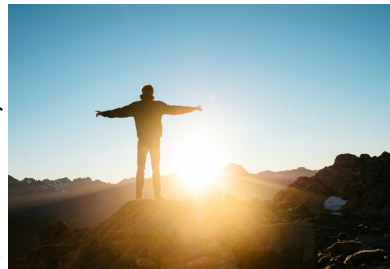
Jesus was inviting Peter to remember why he had followed him in the first place. Jesus didn't call his friends to ascetic sacrifice, but to a life full of the unique joy that comes from the freedom to be for others. This was not a call to a discipleship of cheering a prophet or studying under a rabbi. Jesus was inviting Peter and company to share his very purpose in life.

Matthew, Mark and Luke recount this story as we hear it today. John communicates the same idea by quoting Jesus as saying: “I am the vine and you are the branches” [see John 15]. In both instances, Jesus was inviting them to an all-or-nothing choice — become a part of me, or make your own path to wherever it will lead.

Might we take these Scripture readings as teachings about prayer and discipleship? Both Jeremiah and Peter had a bone to pick with God. And for both of them, it had to do with going where they had never intended to go. But, as we were reflecting above, Jeremiah received a new perspective — nothing was forced on him; and nothing was forced on Peter and his friends. They had their own ideas and God enticed them beyond their safe havens.

Today, we are reminded that, whether we like it or not, the God of Jesus is the great seducer. God simply can't let us settle for puny expectations and sheltered sanctuaries. This God who risked creation and incarnation wants us to share the divine passion — to provoke us into finding our life by letting go.

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



He was, the “Beloved of the Father”.

Now we might say easily that certain other people are our crosses. We might say that a certain physical disability or personality defect is our cross. Conduct is more interior than that. What Jesus is offering the disciples and us is the personal embrace of the totality of our reality — creature, limited, a mind that thinks like a limited creature. We can speak of “pain-avoidance” as a psychological process of not facing the truth of pains. There is a “cross-avoidance” built into our human way of thinking. Our various cultures promote “painless”, “easy” and all other forms of avoiding just what it means to be a creature of God.

Recently I was jogging and twisted my ankle and fell to the pavement. It hurt and I lifted my face and asked silently: “what are You telling me?” A little voice said: “Get up.” So, for the past three weeks I have been getting up with a slight hobble. My injured ankle is not the cross — my struggling with my whole humanity is the cross of my life. By “humanity” I don't mean physical frailty. I mean my history which brings me to my future and destiny. I do not always like my history, my present condition of hobbling, nor my unknown future. I desire to have it all, quick and easy, finding my life now, gaining, winning, but the call is to have a more interior and God-centered thinking pattern about me and thee.

We who are followers of Jesus — who proclaim, Peter-like, that Jesus is the Son of God — are not seduced nor fooled. We believe and struggle with the verticality of our souls and the horizontality of our human creatureliness. The cross is not an event of time, but the time-bound movement toward our own Jerusalem and resurrections. “Get up!” the voice said to Jeremiah, to Jesus, to Peter, and to each of us who hobble after the Master. We show up, waiting for Him to show up and raise us all, and that is the “conduct” of holiness. —taken from the writings of Nancy Shirley and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

## REPAIRING RELATIONSHIPS:

Repentance is not complete until confession and pardon lead to penance that allows community to be restored. Archbishop Desmond Tutu's insistence on real material transformation is evidence of his faith in Christ's incarnation, which shows us how much flesh and blood matter to God. Salvation is not offered to us as some kind of metaphysical prize. It is offered to us in our bodies as God's manifest power to change human lives. While Jesus may have done the hardest work for us, some of us still long for a way both to engage the consequences of our sin and to have a hand in repairing the damage we have done. We want to participate in our own redemption, instead of sitting while Jesus does all the work. We want to be agents of God's grace.

Just for a lark, imagine going to your pastor and confessing your rampant materialism, your devotion to things instead of people, and your isolation from the poor whom Jesus loved. Then imagine being forgiven and given your penance — to select five of your favorite things — including perhaps your Bose radio and your new Coach book bag — and to match them up with five people who you know would turn cartwheels to have them. Then on Saturday, put your lawn mower in your trunk, drive down to that transitional neighborhood where all the old people live and offer to mow lawns for free until dark. Discerning sinners will note that none of this is standard punishment. It is penance, which is not for the purpose of inflicting pain but for the much higher purpose of changing lives by restoring relationships.

Something like that might really get my attention. I might begin to understand that repentance means more than saying “I'm sorry” and that God's grace requires more of me than singing every verse of “Just As I Am.”

Penance is the acceptance of responsibility for repair, and it is one of the most healing things a repentant sinner can do, as well as one of the most painful. True repentance promises us reunion with God and one another. It promises us restoration to community, and to all the responsibilities that go along with life in relationship. —taken from the writings of Father Richard Rohr, O.F.M., which appear on the internet

**THE WAY OF LITTLE SACRIFICES:**

Having four kids — three of them boys close in age — guarantees me at least two things in life — there will always be messes, and there will always be fights. The latter is something that is, most days, minor or done in jest. But every once in a while, we get two of the stubborn ones fighting over a beloved toy, and chaos ensues. One thing that catches my eye is the outside motivation that defuses the rage. I can usually tell how beloved the object is simply by what gets them to pull away for a second and get their head on straight again — “Oh, you’ll trade me for a cookie?” Then I secretly note the true value of the toy that I can likely donate in the future.

But the fights that really tell me something are the ones that end on their own with little help from me. When I remind them that pulling at the toy will likely break it, the first one to let go is usually the one that truly loves that toy — the rudimentary life lesson that if we truly love something — or someone — we have to be ready and willing to let it go if that is what is best for it.

In the Scripture readings for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time, we are blasted with the same lesson — only with eternal weight. If we love our own life, we must be ready to lose it all for the sake of Christ. Letting go of attachments to this world isn’t just recommended — it’s mandatory. The message is clear — if we truly love God and want to be with him, we will let go of our wishes and desires and travel a new path, the path of Gospel living.

As an adult, this is a hard concept. It’s easy to be endeared by children fighting over toys learning a similar lesson. Their stakes are low. It’s a replaceable toy. But as we grow and life becomes seemingly more complicated, this lesson in love often grays. What exactly does it mean to die to self? How am I to be transformed by the Gospel? Do I actually have a thirst for God, or am I living a two-faced life? The stakes are higher. Christ is truly calling me to a radical way of living for his sake and the sake of building up the kingdom.

Even St. Peter, who knew Jesus intimately and walked with him, was put off by this call at first. We hear in Matthew’s Gospel that he was unwilling to accept that Christ would suffer at the hands of the scribes and Pharisees. In many ways, he was clinging to his idyllic idea of life with Christ. He was hoping things wouldn’t be so hard, but Christ rebuked him, sending a clear message that the way of the Gospel is a life contrary to the world [Matthew 16:21-27].

I don’t blame Peter. My day-to-day life is filled to the brim with my ideas about how things ought to be. I seek comfort and the easy way most times — especially when it comes to the daily tasks that are ordinary and repetitive. But underneath this current of what I feel things should be, Christ is calling me. Come after me, deny yourself so that you may live.

In *Christifideles Laici*, St. John Paul II reminds us: “Men and women saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult circumstances in the Church’s history. Today we have the greatest need of saints whom we must assiduously beg God to raise up”. In truth, we are being beckoned to rise up in this time. You and I are here in this day and age for a purpose. You are where you are right now because God has some definitive purpose for you to build up the kingdom. How will we respond?

There will be some of us called to do pretty incredible things. An example from this took place during the recent flooding in California. A priest — Father David — who was so moved to bring Jesus to his flock during catastrophic flooding that he got in his kayak to seek them out and celebrate Mass. I think for most of us the opportunities will come in small hidden ways — ways that may go unnoticed if we aren’t listening. For me, times like this might come when a friend starts gossiping as we are talking. The comfortable part of me just wants to listen and pretend it’s no big deal. However, when I remember what I really love, I know I’m being called to choose the uncomfortable way. In that hidden moment, it’s



bay. What we use to buoy us up wards off both chaos and grace, demons and the divine alike. Conversely, when we are helpless we are open. That is why the desert is both the place of chaos and the place of God’s closeness.

It is no accident that Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King felt God’s presence so unmistakably just at that point in their lives where they had lost everything that could support them. They were in the desert. Scripture assures us that it is there that God can send angels to minister to us.

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

**INCLUDING EVERYING:**

The True Self is always humble. It knows that we didn’t do it right and that it isn’t even about doing it right; it’s just about doing it. Our True Self knows that everything belongs. That means holding together the good and the bad, the dark and the light, the sinner and the saint — which are two parts of me and two parts of everything. It is our participation in divinity which allows us to be this large.

Only God, it seems, is spacious enough to include everything. Humans need to expel, exclude, deny, and avoid. We just can’t hold very much by our private selves. Only God in me, only me in God, can hold the contraries. Forgiveness could almost be God’s very name and identity.

Our first forgiveness is not toward a particular sin or offense. Our first forgiveness is toward reality itself — to forgive it for being so broken, a mixture of good and bad. First that paradox has to overcome inside of us. Then, when we allow God to hold together the opposites within us, it becomes possible to do it over there in our neighbor and even our enemy. Finally, our worldview and politics change. We can no longer project our evil onto another country, religion, minority group, race, or political party.

Only the false self easily takes offense. The false self can’t live a self-generated life of immediate contact with God. It defines itself by the past, which is to live in un-forgiveness. Forgiveness is the only way to free ourselves from the entrapment of the past. We’re in need not only of individual forgiveness; we need it on a national, global, and cosmic scale. Old hurts linger long in our memories and are hard to let go. We must each learn how to define ourselves by the present moment — which is all we really have. I will not define myself by what went wrong yesterday when I can draw upon Life and Love right now. Life and Love are what’s real. This Infinite Love is both in us — and yet it is more than us.

—Father Richard Rohr, O.F.M.

**EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS:**

We are currently discerning a new group of Eucharistic Ministers who would undergo training within the next month. If you feel that the Lord is calling you to this ministry, we would be delighted to include you in that ministry here at Our Lady Chapel. Both adults and teens [must be a Senior in High School] are welcome to participate in this very special ministry. We are in need of ministers for both our Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses. **Contact Father John or the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you feel called to this ministry.** We are always in need of Eucharistic Ministers.

**GOD LEADS US IN STRANGE WAYS:**

When was the last time you let God have it in anger? I suspect lots of Christians balk at the idea of telling God off. It sounds irreverent — perhaps even blasphemous. Unlike us, our Hebrew ancestors knew that along with love, praise and petition, a deep relationship with God can withstand angry outbursts and even some whining.

Jeremiah is the champion lamenter of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Hebrew tradition of “fear of

### THE DESERT — THE PLACE OF GOD’S CLOSENESS:

In her biography, *The Long Loneliness*, Dorothy Day shares how, shortly after her conversion to Catholicism, she went through a painful, desert time. She had just given birth to her daughter and her decision to have the child baptized, coupled with her profession of faith, meant the end of her relationship with a man she deeply loved. She suddenly found herself alone. All her old supports had been cut off and she was left with no money, no job, few friends, no practical dream, and no companionship from the person she loved the most deeply in this world. For a while she just stumbled on, trusting that things would soon get better. They didn’t. She remained in this desert.

It is no accident that Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King felt God’s presence so unmistakably.

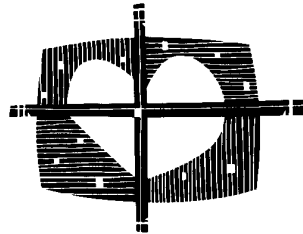
One day, not knowing what else to do, she took a train from New York to Washington to spend a day praying at the National Shrine of Our Lady. Her prayer there was wrenching — naked. She describes how she laid bare her helplessness, spilling out her confusion, her doubts, her fears, and her temptations to bitterness and despair. In essence, she said to God: “I have given up everything that ever supported me, in trust, to you. I have nothing left to hold on to. You need to do something for me — soon. I can’t keep this up much longer!”

She was, biblically speaking, in the desert — alone, without support, helpless before a chaos that threatened to overwhelm her — and, as was the case with Jesus. Both in the desert and in Gethsemane, God “sent angels to minister to him.” God did the same for Dorothy. God steadied her in the chaos. She caught a train back to New York and, that very night, as walked up to her apartment she saw a man sitting there. His name was Peter Maurin — and the rest is history. Together they started the *Catholic Worker*. We should not be surprised that her prayer had such a tangible result. The desert, scripture assures us, is the place where God is specially near.

Martin Luther King shares a similar story. In, *Stride Towards Freedom*, he relates how one night a hate-filled phone call shook him to his depths and plunged him into a desert of fear. Here are his words: “An angry voice said: ‘Listen, nigger, we’ve taken all we want from you; before next week you’ll be sorry you ever came to Montgomery.’ I hung up, but I couldn’t sleep. It seemed that all of my fears had come down on me at once. I had reached the saturation point. I got out of bed and began to walk the floor. Finally I went to the kitchen and heated a pot of coffee. I was ready to give up. With my coffee sitting untouched before me I tried to think of a way to move out of the picture without appearing a coward. In this state of exhaustion, when my courage had all but gone, I decided to take my problem to God. With my head in my hand, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud. The words I spoke to God that midnight are still vivid in my memory: ‘I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I’ve come to the point where I can’t take it alone.’ At that moment I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced Him before.”

God sends his angels to minister to us when we are in the desert and in the garden of Gethsemane. This incident in Martin Luther King’s life demonstrates how.

The desert, as we know, is the place where, stripped of all that normally nourishes and supports us, we are exposed to chaos, raw fear, and demons of every kind. In the desert we are exposed, body and soul, made vulnerable to be overwhelmed by chaos and temptations of every kind. But, precisely because we are so stripped of everything we normally rely on, this is also a privileged moment for grace. Why? Because all the defense mechanisms, support systems, and distractions that we normally surround ourselves with so as to keep chaos and fear at bay work at the same time to keep much of God’s grace at



time to rise up and do something.

My prayer is that we choose to be countercultural saints in the small moments, and thirst deeply for life with God — so much so that we are happy to lose our idyllic life of the world for a life in Christ. Nothing we do for Christ is too small and the Gospel today promises we will be repaid according to our conduct.

—taken from the writings of Angie Windnagle, which appears on the internet.

### BEING FAITHFUL:

“Do not conform yourselves to this age,” St. Paul writes in his letter to the Church at Rome [12:1-2]. Because God has been so merciful to us, we should offer a sacrifice to God — not the animal sacrifices of the Jewish law, but the sacrifice of our bodies, our whole bodily existence in the world. We need a “renewal” of our mind so we can “discern” God’s will — “what is good and pleasing and perfect.” Paul is warning against simply accepting worldly wisdom, cultural assumptions and secular ideologies. The Apostle wants us to concentrate instead on conducting ourselves in conformity to God’s will. This requires prayerful reflection which relates the Christian message to real life situations.

The world that serves as our habitat is itself an ambivalent mix of grace and sin. Some developments in our culture are in accord with the Gospel; others are opposed. Sin gets embedded in institutions and systems, producing false consciousness. We are tempted to accept evil as normal — as just the way things are. The prophets help us name social sins: for example, racism, sexism, individualism, hedonism, and consumerism. Paul encourages us to discern the evil in these isms and to transform their negative energy into a positive force for good.

As a society, we are in danger of turning the social sin of political polarization into a new normal. There is a temptation to accept some questionable assumptions — that partisan considerations will always outweigh moral norms; that negative political ads are the only effective way to conduct a campaign; that civil discourse in the political arena is a lost art; that Congressional gridlock is unavoidable; and that the search for common ground is a futile enterprise.

Ordinary Christians, however, are called to transform political polarization into constructive collaboration for the common good. A couple who split their presidential vote could have a reasonable conversation on the administration’s travel ban. Catholics could follow the lead of their bishops and use the consistent ethic of life as the basis for judging candidates. More citizens could get involved in the political process. Elected officials could socialize periodically with colleagues of the other party. Voters could reward candidates who refuse to use negative ads to attack their opponent’s character. Pastors could remind their parishioners that voting intelligently is a moral obligation.

How could you be a more faithful citizen?

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

### SUPPORT LANCER ATHLETICS:

How would you like to win a new car? Thanks to the generous sponsorship of Medina Auto Mall and the Northeast Ohio Buick GMC Dealers, Gilmour Academy is raffling off a brand new **2023 GMC Acadia SLE!** All ticket proceeds will be directed to the Campaign for Lancer Athletics, benefiting each and every Gilmour student. You can enter to win by visiting [gilmour.org/car](http://gilmour.org/car). Tickets are available for \$100 each and **one lucky winner will be drawn at the final regular season home football game vs Brush on Friday, October 6 [winner doesn’t need to be present to win].** Don’t miss your chance. Buy your tickets today! Participants must be 18 years of age or older to purchase a ticket.



**WINDSTORMS AND VIOLINS:**

Life is difficult! This is the opening sentence of Scott Peck's book, *The Road Less Traveled* — and I think there would be few of us here today who would argue with the truth of that statement. Even when our lives are well grounded, even when things are going smoothly, it does not take long before something challenges us, something attacks us, something causes us pain. As Roseann-Roseannadana used to say on the old *Saturday Night Live*: "It's always something; if it's not one thing, it's another." Each one of us has a cross to carry, and carrying that cross makes life difficult.

The hope that comes from Matthew's Gospel is this — that which is difficult can also be good. When Jesus says to his disciples that they must take up their cross and follow him [Matthew 16:21-27], he is not assigning them a punishment. He is offering the assurance that when they take up a difficult part of life and carry it as a cross after Jesus, it need not destroy them. In fact, it can have the power to strengthen them and open them more to life.

A famous Italian violin maker was known to carefully select the wood for his violins from the north side of the tree trunk. When people questioned him about this, he pointed out that it was the north side of the tree that faced the brunt of the storm. It was that side of the tree that was buffeted by the wind and the rain. As a result, the wood on that side was stronger and more resilient. He found that if he shaped his violins from the wood on the north side of the tree, both the tone and the timbre of those instruments would be richer. Therefore, when the winds came and the rains struck, one could hear the trees of the forest groan under the violence of the storm. But the violin maker would only smile and say: "I love that sound, for it's the sound of trees learning to be violins."



When Jesus says in Matthew's Gospel, that we must take up our cross and follow him, he is pointing to a similar truth. As difficult as it can be to bear the burdens of life, they have the possibility of deepening us, teaching us, and allowing us to grow. It is often in times of stress or trouble that we make progress, that we hear things that otherwise we would not have the time or the patience to hear. CS Lewis says that "God whispers to us in our pleasures; God speaks to us in our conscience; but God shouts to us in our pain. Pain is the megaphone that God uses to rouse a deafened world." Pain certainly seizes our attention.

Now we need to be careful here because to say that good can come from pain is not the same as saying pain is good. Sickness, suffering and death are evils and we should do all that we can to avoid them. But when evils must be faced — when they cannot be avoided — we are called to take them up as crosses to follow after Christ. When we do that, they have the potential to deepen us and to open us more to life.

I know this to be true because I have heard it from the testimony of so many people. I've spoken to a woman dying of cancer, who told me that through God's help, she is more alive today than in any other moment of her life. I've talked to a young college student who shared with me of how his girl-friend dropped him after a three year relationship, and after he made his way through the pain, with God's help, he realized that he was a stronger person than he ever imagined himself to be. I've spoken with a young mother who lost her daughter in crib death, and who witnessed to me that once she worked through the sorrow, with God's help, it was turned into energy for ministry to other mothers who lose their children in similar circumstances. I've spoken to a young married couple, who after their first major argument and all the hurt and pain and healing that it involved, could say that with God's help, their relationship today is deeper and more real than it was before. I've had lunch with an unemployed steel worker who shared with me that it was not until he lost his job that he began to realize how valuable his family was.

Life is difficult. Each one of us has a cross to bear. But the good news is that our cross is not a punishment but an opportunity. So, when evil strikes, when pain begins, do not be afraid or despair. If we can take up our cross and carry it in Jesus' name, it need not paralyze us or destroy us. If wind storms

We look forward to being completely immersed with His Presence. That is why we cannot let anything deter us from the object of our hope. "He loves you too little who loves along with you anything else that he does not love for your sake," Augustine wrote. We can't have it both ways. We cannot be both Christian and pagan. We can't be moral in some areas and immoral in others. We can't love God if we love that which is opposed to all that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful.

We do know how to love for the sake of God. You strive to do this in your marriages and families. I strive to do this in my priesthood. Your wives, your husbands, your children, my priesthood, my parish, the poor, the sick, the marginalized, and so on and so forth — all these we love these because others are given to us to draw us closer to God.

Here is Augustine's beautiful poem summing the Confessions of his life and perhaps so much of our lives: "Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would not have been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace." St. Augustine expresses the deep desire within every one of us. We also have tasted the Lord, and now we long for more. And it's there for us. More is there for us. God is there for us. God is here for us.

But we need courage. We need courage to step away from the allurements of the world. We need courage to divorce ourselves from the immorality that the intellectual fools of our society promote as normal. We need courage to fight against anything that can douse the fire of Love the Lord has kindled within each of us.

And so, we pray: "Lord, transform us into your people."

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

**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.

**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, August 26]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-i]----- \$ 730.00**  
**Offerings-----[Sunday, August 27]----- \$ 120.00**



**BY HOPE WE ARE SAVED:**

I spend a lot of time watching TV — probably way too much time. I like sports, so I see a lot of baseball, and now that football has begun — I’m hooked! I have certain shows that I like — many of them some form of mysteries, others some relaxing sitcoms. And then there is *Netflix*.

But I know that when the Emmys come around I’m going to be disappointed, as I usually am when the Oscars or Tony’s are announced. It is not just that the shows I like are usually overlooked — it is that the award programs seem to be intent on promoting an immoral value system, treating all sorts of really sick behavior as normal and mocking all who would disagree. The irreligious and immoral elements of our society have had great success in convincing many people that there is a new normal — one that accepts what any committed Christian recognizes is unacceptable.

This aspect of the world was not all that different back in the days of St. Augustine. His life and his most famous work — *Confessions* — truly reflect our Scripture Readings for this 22<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time. Like us, Augustine was surrounded by a society of so-called intellectuals that told him immorality was normal and acceptable.

St. Augustine was born in 354 AD in Tagaste, then part of the North African territory of the Roman Empire, now Algeria. He was intelligent — very intelligent — perhaps one of the most intelligent people ever. Like some of the intellectuals of our time, he sought justification for immorality within his own life and the lives of his friends. He sought happiness in physical satisfaction. He got a girl pregnant, and then dumped her after the baby was born. She was only the first of many women in his life. He sought happiness in intellectual endeavors — flirting with various forms of paganism. He finally realized that truth could only be found in the Church, but he did not want to sacrifice his pleasures in order to live as a Christian. But like Jeremiah, there was fire burning in his heart [Jeremiah 20:7-9]. He had to listen to the voice of God in his conscience.

Responding to God’s call would not be easy for Augustine. He had to struggle to fight off his selfishness — particularly in the area of sexuality. He had to humble himself to recognize that his intellect was inferior to Divine Knowledge. “You duped me Lord, and I was duped,” Jeremiah complained. Augustine would have said the same thing: “You called me Lord to you. I thought this would be easy. But the path is difficult.”

We would agree. We would say: “It is so hard to serve you Lord in a world where we are mocked for standing for the sacredness of marriage, for the dignity of the person, for respecting the body.” To Augustine and to us, Jesus says: “Take up your cross and follow me.” “Don’t be conformed to this world,” Paul writes in his letter to the Church at Rome [Romans 12:1-2]; “instead, be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you might discern what God’s will is.”

St. Augustine wrote a long prayer to God about his life. We call this book his *Confessions*. *The Confessions of St. Augustine* is more than his autobiography. It is a guide for us to understand the gifts offered to us by Grace. It is so easy to be a passive audience — reading what Augustine went through. It is challenging for us to understand that his journey was no different than ours.

Most people have heard about Augustine’s book. The theme is found in the first pages — “Our hearts are made for you, O God, and shall not rest until they rest in you.” Nothing that we seek in this world can bring us lasting happiness. All pleasure is fleeting. We spend our lives seeking happiness. But like Augustine, we often look for it in the wrong places. Our hearts, our love, comes from God. Our search for happiness, for love, and our hearts, will not be satisfied until they are fully united to God.

Towards the end of the *Confessions*, Augustine wrote something that is often overlooked. He wrote: “In hope we are saved.” Our hope is in God. We long for union with Him; and we trust that this union will be ours. We have a slight taste of this gift when we recognize the joy of His Presence in our lives.



can change trees into violins, then certainly the crosses we carry in Jesus’ name, can transform us into genuine daughters and sons of God! —taken from the writings of Father George Smiga, which appear on the internet

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

**Monday:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Luke 4:16-30

**Tuesday:** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Luke 4:31-37

**Wednesday:** Colossians 1:1-8, Luke 4:38-44

**Thursday:** Colossians 1:9-14, Luke 5:1-11

**Friday:** Micah 5:1-4, Romans 8:28-30, Matthew 1:1-23

**Saturday:** Colossians 1:21-23, Luke 6:1-5

**23<sup>rd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time:** Ezekiel 33:7-9, Romans 13:8-10, Matthew 18:15-20

**LET’S LOOK AT STRESS:**

We are all living with more stress than we can handle now, one way or another. So what is stress, and is it all bad? When is enough of it enough? And what, if any of it, is holy?

If you rub the thumb of one hand up and down on the other hand from the root of your finger to the back of your wrist, that’s not stress. If you rub your thumb up and down from the root of your finger to the back of your wrist for one straight hour, however, the skin begins to breakdown, to get inflamed, to swell a little — and you’re in trouble. It isn’t that rubbing the back of one hand with the thumb of the other is wrong. In fact, massage therapists do it with great therapeutic effect. Your mistake is that you should have stopped rubbing it much sooner than you did.

Too much of anything in too great a dosage is stress. Too much traffic for too many hours a day for too many days a year is stress. Too much pressure, too much fatigue, too much debt, too much worry is stress. Too much of anything, in fact, is stress.

But stress itself is not necessarily bad. It takes a good deal of stress to do the creative, backbreaking work of meeting deadlines, writing papers, building a house, painting the living room. But, in most instances, that kind of stress is time-bound. If it has to be done by a certain day and hour, it probably will be, however incomplete. A due date becomes what stops us from spending our lives doing something that can be done in far less time and ought not to consume a life in the first place. Work that is limited, periodic, or confined to a certain time or place moves us from one thing to another in life, helping us to measure ourselves every step of the way.

Obviously, stress can be a senseless burden as well as a good gift. When it wears us down physically, it limits what we ought to be doing with the strength we have. When it wears us down emotionally, it affects the way we respond to other people and pollutes their lives as well. When it wears us down psychologically, it confuses our reactions and befuddles the mind.

The point is that stress can be both positive and negative. But in the end, it has something to do with whether we turn our life into a living flame or burn it quickly down to black ash.

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

**FREEDOM FROM BECOMING YOUR OWN SAVIOR:**

I need the Eucharist. That was my first thought. I had barely made it out of bed, but already I felt somehow “unclean” — though I couldn’t tell you why. My mind ran over sins that I had confessed the day before, replaying them, fixating on them. I knew that through Reconciliation my sins had been absolved, but I still didn’t feel like I had adequately “paid” for them. I imagined that God was looking down on me in disgust, wanting me to be feel ashamed for my failures.

For a long time, I’ve struggled with the feeling that I need to punish myself for my sins — and if I don’t, then God isn’t pleased with me. I used to entertain these thoughts way too much, and let myself get caught up in the anxiety of it all. But over time I’ve learned to give it God. And the main way I learned that is through the Eucharist.

Someone once told me that when we try to punish ourselves for our sins, we are rejecting Christ. We are trying to be our own saviors, and therefore rejecting His saving passion. This forever changed the way I viewed myself and my sin. Once I understood this, I could no longer entertain any ideas about self-punishment. After that, any time that I had a thought about needing to pay for my sins, I knew that I had to turn my attention to the cross.

Just thinking about this, though, usually wasn’t enough. It wasn’t until I turned to the Eucharist that I really found any peace.

There’s this one prayer that I pray all the time — when I wake up, when I’m taking a shower, after Communion — you get the idea. This prayer has been incredibly important to me, and it’s called: *Anima Christi*.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.  
Body of Christ, save me.  
Blood of Christ, inebriate me.  
Water from Christ’s side, wash me.  
Passion of Christ, comfort me.  
Within Thy wounds, hide me.  
Let me never be separated from Thee.

It’s in those last three lines, in which I ask Christ to place me in His own wounds, that I finally found some peace. You see, when I consume the Eucharist at Mass, I’m making this same prayer in that action. I am asking that Christ and His wounds come into my body and be manifested in me. I am asking that He transform me from the inside out. I am asking that I be so close to Him as to be “within Thy wounds”. When I present myself for Communion, I am begging God: “Let me never be separated from Thee.”

Understanding this — knowing that Christ truly does enter into this union with me — how could I possibly reject Him by trying to save myself? How could I possibly accept Him and His passion into my very body and then turn around and say: “No, I don’t want your sacrifice. I want to do it myself.”?

When I feel those thoughts coming on, I try to go to Mass as soon as possible because I know that only the memorial of His passion and the sacred meal of the Eucharist can bring me healing. When understood properly, the sacraments bring the certainty of His love and mercy — like nothing else could. Seeing the beauty of Communion has also helped me better understand another important sacrament — the Sacrament of Reconciliation [also known as Confession].

So how are Reconciliation and self-punishment different? Aren’t they the same thing? No, not at all! Let me explain. Self-punishment is directed entirely inwards — it’s all about me, how horrible I am, and what I need to do to pay for it. Reconciliation, on the other hand, is directed outwards — it’s about the greatness of our God, the mercy of our God, and the worship He deserves. Reconciliation is



the opposite of self-punishment — it is self-gift.

The catechism tells us that Reconciliation is first and foremost about conversion of heart — “Jesus’ call to conversion and penance, like that of the prophets before him, does not aim first at outward works, fasting, and mortification, but at the conversion of the heart, interior conversion. Without this, such penances remain sterile and false; however, interior conversion urges expression in visible signs, gestures and works of penance” [CCC, #1430]. The catechism also tells us this: “The human heart is converted by looking upon him whom our sins have pierced” [1432].

Sorrow for our sins leads us to the confessional, and, yes, God gives us His mercy. But He doesn’t stop there. Recondition is the Father’s way of teaching me His love. He gives me the dignity of participating in His love, of being drawn into Him, of sacrificing with Him. When we receive His grace, it changes us. It transforms us ever more into His image and likeness and makes us able to love the way He loves. It enables us to sacrifice with Him and for Him. Like Jesus Himself said to Saint Faustina: “Come close to My wounds and draw from the Fountain of Life whatever your heart desires. Look at the splendors of My mercy and do not fear the enemies of your salvation.”

Learning to sacrifice with Jesus is not easy — and it’s especially not easy when you’re used to beating yourself up about your every failure. The important thing to remember is that, even when we’re in a state of sin, Jesus wants us to draw close to Him. He has given us the sacrament of Reconciliation for this reason and no other. It is not there to make us feel horrible about ourselves — it is not there as a means of self-punishment.

His sacraments are always about love, healing, and union. In the Eucharist, in Confession, we draw close to Him. And we cannot draw close to Jesus without drawing close to His sacred wounds.

—taken from the writings of Sophia Swinford, a college student

**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 Chapel. If**

**you are unable to join us, there are many resources available for you on the Life Teen website — [lifeteen.com](http://lifeteen.com). There are numerous blogs and videos for you to connect with. The Life Teen national office continues to release many new programs. Please contact Father John for more information. And please join us each Sunday for our Mass at 10 AM — in person or live-streamed, and then come to our Life Teen/EDGE gathering after Mass. And above all, let us continue to join each other in prayer. Father John is available for you. Please contact him [cell: 216-570-9276].**

**THE BEAUTY OF LETTER WRITING:**

As I was writing letters today, I realized that writing letters is a much more intimate way of communicating than making phone calls. It may sound strange, but I often feel closer to friends to whom I write than to friends with whom I speak with by phone. When I write, I think deeply about my friends, I pray for them, I tell them my emotions and feelings. I reflect on our relationship, and I dwell with them in a very personal way.

Over the past few months I have come to enjoy letter writing more and more. In the beginning it seemed like a heavy burden, but now it is a relaxing time of the day. It feels like interrupting work for a conversation with a friend.

The beauty of letter writing is that it deepens friendships and makes them more real. I have also discovered that letter writing makes me pray more concretely for my friends. Early in the morning I spend a little time praying for each person to whom I have written and promised my prayers.

I feel surrounded by the friends I am writing to and praying for. Our love for each other is very concrete and life giving. Thank God for letters, for those who send them, and for those who receive them.

—Henri Nouwen