

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ Prayer of Praise ~

How glorious is your dwelling place,
O loving creator.

My soul longs
For the abode of my beloved.
All that is within me
Sings for joy
To the living heart of love.

You invite me to dwell
Within your heart.
Blessed am I
When my heart is filled with love,
Singing your praises
With a grateful heart.

Help me to put my trust
In your strength.
Remove my doubts and fears.
Allow me to dwell
Within the peace of your house.

O eternal love,
Hear my prayer.
Give ear to my voice.
Forgive whatever is unholy within me,
Cleanse me of my sins.
For a day within your hear
Is more than a thousand elsewhere.
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.

**BLESSING OF ANIMALS — OCTOBER 3:**

On **Sunday, October 3rd**, our Chapel community will gather after Mass at **11:35 AM** to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. In the spirit of this celebration we welcome your family to bring your pet to be blessed. If you cannot bring your pet, bring a photo to share. Weather permitting we will meet this year — because of COVID-19 — outside in the Red Brick part of Pender Circle [right outside the chapel]. **If it rains on this day, the event will be postponed until the following Sunday.** We hope you can 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 1st 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

**CHANGING OUR VIEW OF GOD:**

Through darkness and doubt often come the greatest creativity and faith. Our faith is strengthened every time we go through a period of questioning — “Why do I believe this? Do I believe this at all? What do I base my life on?” When we are at rock bottom, everything becomes clearer — self-image, God-image, worldview.

It takes a long time to purify the experience of dysfunctional family life, abuse, manipulation, shaming, negativity, or judgmental attitudes. As St. John of the Cross described: “our gods must each die until we find the true God.” Or as Meister Eckhart put it: “Let us pray to God that we may be free of God.”

To allow and fully experience the darkness is an immense act of courage — from “cor-agere,” “an act of the heart”. Our natural instinct is to pull back from others, to move into a self-chosen exile. But when we are cut off or alienated from others, wounds are exacerbated rather than healed.

In the darkness, it's hard to feel courageous. We resist love. “I will prove that I'm unworthy. I will not let you get to me.” Yet we must turn toward the very people we are pushing away — those who love us and who see meaning in our life when we can't. It sounds naïve and simplistic, but love is the greatest healer.

In the darkness, we usually look for someone to blame, to absolve ourselves from the problem. I think we've been led into a period of exile again — both as a culture and as a Church — as evidenced by increased hostility and blame of the “other.” The shame-and-blame game is all about projecting our inner state elsewhere. That's why Jesus taught that, for the sake of our soul, we must love our enemy. The enemy — or whomever we resent, dislike, or are annoyed by — carries our dark side. “Why do you try to take the speck out of your brother's or sister's eye, when you cannot see the log in your own?” [Matthew 7:5].

Not all criticism is blind negativity. Healthy critique offers hope and vision when we own our complicity in the problem. People who love something have earned the right to make it better and keep it true to its deepest vision. We must first recognize that God has something to teach us personally — not just the group or institution. —taken from the writings of Father Richard Rohr, O.F.M., which appear on the internet

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 in hospice care.
- For Jill Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for medical issues.
- For Danny Yuhas ['27], who is recovering from surgery.
- For David Winchester, uncle of Athletic Director, Sean O'Toole, great-uncle of Owen ['18], Connor ['20], Kelsey ['24], and former Gilmour student, Erin O'Toole, who is seriously ill.
- For Shirley Smith, sister-in-law of Brother Charles Smith, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.

FOR THE DECEASED:

- 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
- For Jack Kelley, brother of Father William Kelley, C.S.C.
- For Jennifer Mills, mother of Morgan Converse ['11], and mother-in-law of Edward Converse ['09].
- For Lexi Hagen, half sister of Carson Hundstad ['25].

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For the victims of the fires in Maui, and Hurricane, Idalia.
- For an end to violence as a means to resolve differences.
- 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.

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.

**TRUST IN GOD:**

Trust God in such a way that you do not forget to do your part. But do your part in such a way that you realize that God alone is at work. — Monsignor Frank Bognanno

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., grandfather 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], and brother of Gilmour Marketing associate, Mary Roddy Stretar, uncle of Katie Stretar [*29], 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 27th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, September 6th 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: Heaven, Hell and Purgatory

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 10: 23 rd Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, September 11: Anniversary of 9/11	NO MASS
Tuesday, September 12:	NO MASS
Wednesday, September 13: St. John Chrysostom	NO MASS
Thursday, September 14: Exaltation of the Holy Cross	NO MASS
Friday, September 15: Our Lady of Sorrows	9:30 AM [All School] Live Stream
Saturday, September 16: 24 th Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, September 17: 24 ^e Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

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. 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.



REFLECTION FOR THE WEEK:

In the Book of Genesis, Cain asked God if he was his brother's keeper [Genesis 4:9]. Are we our brothers' or sisters' keepers? The Scripture Readings for this 23rd Week in Ordinary Time invite us to consider our responsibilities to others in the area of their well-being and that of the community.

None of us is without fault. But the disorder caused by our faults and sins is opposite of the mission to which each of us is called — to bring peace and reconciliation. We are all called to be honest, direct, communal and compassionate. But it is easier to let it all happen and deal later with the fractures.

Through the prophet Ezekiel we are all called to something more. God is reminding Ezekiel — and us — that watchmen have been selected to warn the cities of any advancing dangerous warriors; the people are depending on these watchmen to fulfill their tasks. If they fail then they will die for their guilt [Ezekiel 33:1-9]. The message is clear. If God tells Ezekiel to confront a wicked person, then he has to do it. If Ezekiel resists, then the wicked person will die, but the prophet will be held responsible for that person's death.

Prophets call us to live in the present moment. Their mission of announcing God's word is both communal and individual and personal. Ezekiel — as with Jeremiah, Amos, Isaiah, and the others — calls out the nation and its leaders because of their infidelities. But Ezekiel's mission is not only to the nation, but also to individual persons when their faults injure themselves or the harmony of the group. This message flows from the traditions found in Deuteronomy and Leviticus, whose laws and customs were all given that the people might relate in unity and reverence as God's holy family.

Matthew pictures Jesus specifying these traditions [Matthew 18:15-20]. If someone sins against you, address the issue by confronting the sinner. If that does not have any good results, gather an intervention team and ask the sinner to listen and change. If that does not work, then let the issue be known to the community from which the person is now not in communication. The word "church" here means the "gathered together".

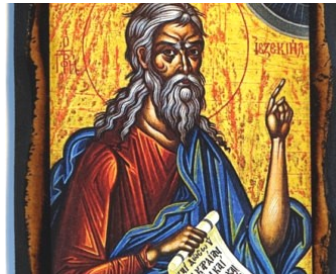
At first glance, the final words of Jesus seem to be inviting, but they need to be well understood.

Will praying together for anything always bring it about? Would that this were true. The problem, of course, would be when three of you were praying for rain on your fields, and three of us were praying for a sunny day for our picnic. We have all asked for a healing of some kind, in deep faith and in a group, and it did not heal. Should we say that Jesus was just exaggerating?

Nobody knows exactly why God seems to answer some prayers and not others. What is good for the family of God and the unity and harmony are parts of the answer. The truth is that we think we know what is best for the harmony of humankind or even our communities. We have to believe that God is always laboring for the larger good than just our own.

Confrontation and intervention are difficult ways of bringing about harmony. We are all very good finders-of-faults in those around us. But the problem is whether their faults or problems are more about my sense of what's right, proper and orderly. I am a charter member of the Clean-Freak Club — especially in the kitchen. There are others who express their view of order in different ways. My joy is an empty sink and dishes dried and put away. Others seem to have a degree in Structural Engineering and so delight in building huge well-balanced and harmonious compilations of dishes and glasses and bowls and pans which can defy the laws of gravity. I say, do it my way; they say that I should ease up and things will work out. This is a small issue in the grand scale of things, but it does speak to the issue of fault-finding.

My personal opinion needs ratification and discussion with others. If somebody is hurting themselves and so consequently others, then I must not ease up. Sin is social. If someone is becoming less a part of the "gathered" by their self-damaging actions, then the "gathered" have less of that person's

**WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER:**

Years ago, in a radio interview, the late actor Dennis Weaver mentioned why *Gunsmoke's* "Mr. Dillon" had a sidekick like Chester. "All radio and TV western heroes needed someone to be with them; otherwise the show and movies would be terribly boring — the audience would never know what the heroes were thinking. The Lone Ranger talks to Tonto; Gene Autry confides in Smiley Burnette. Without their sidekicks, the heroes wouldn't have been heroes."

In some sense, the same thing applies to our faith. Unless we somehow associate with others, our faith — no matter how deep — could quickly become meaningless. Biblical faith is never to be lived on a mountain top. Only when it's experienced in the midst of a community does it make sense. Unless we're relating with others, the examples of living given us by the Lord and the risen Jesus are useless. It's easy to "imagine" we're believers. Actually giving ourselves for others proves it. As *M*A*S*H's* Fr. Mulcahy once observed: "No matter how good you are at bluffing in poker, eventually you've got to show your cards." Only then does the rubber hit the road.

Paul reflects on our unique situation in his letter to the Church at Rome — "Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another" [Romans 13:8-10]. Biblical faith only comes alive when we share our love with others. Since nothing should stand in the way of that love, the Apostle reminds those early Jewish/Christians in the Roman church whose lives once revolved around obeying the 613 Laws of Moses: "Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law."

Yet, as we know, there's no one action that to everyone always shows love. Our acts of love differ because the needs of those we love differ. For example, as a prophet, Ezekiel shows love by being the community's "watchman." It's his responsibility to let them know what God wants them to do [Ezekiel 33:1-9]. In 6th century BCE Israel, the normal way the Chosen People surface God's will is by first surfacing the community's prophets, and then carrying out what they tell them to do. If any prophet refuses to follow through on his/her ministry, they'll suffer the same punishment as those who refuse to listen to the Lord.

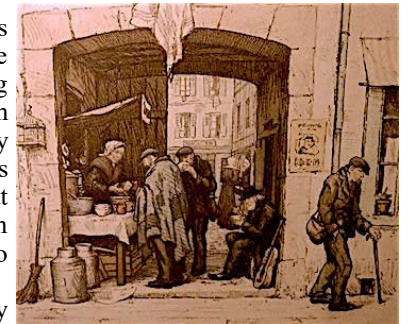
Because the first followers of Jesus were convinced that they shared in Jesus' prophetic ministry, Matthew's Jesus stresses their responsibility to confront others in the community when those others refuse to show love to those around them [Matthew 18:15-20].

Though overlooked by many, Matthew's Jesus gives the whole community the same power to bind and loose that Peter personally received [see Matthew 16]. There is a built-in tension which Matthew is convinced is necessary in any loving Christian community. In other words, there're no simple answers to complicated questions. Not only that, but Jesus takes his disciples' prerogatives one step further — "if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father" [Matthew 18:15-20].

Of course, all this community stuff must be seen against the background of love. We're not just people who accidentally find ourselves in the same stadium crowd. We're actually the loving body of Christ. As Matthew's community quickly found out, it's in the acts of love we share that we discover the risen Jesus in our midst — "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The people we encounter during our lives aren't just sidekicks who help us reveal ourselves to others. More than anything else, they help us reveal ourselves to ourselves. Only when we show them love do we surface the hero in ourselves.

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



are supposed to guard those who hire them, but God commissioned this watchman to disturb his clientele. Who but God would think of that? It certainly doesn't bode well for long-term employment!

God tells Ezekiel that if he doesn't speak out, he'll be responsible for all the wickedness that he lets pass him by. Now that's a heavy burden. Ezekiel's only option is to do like the comedians and warn folks that their behavior is pressing down the accelerator on their impending doom.

Growing up, Jesus surely learned about Ezekiel and his thankless vocation. Perhaps he meditated on Ezekiel's task as he went about whatever kept him busy before he began his public mission. However, he came to it, Jesus took the prophetic call to heart, and he figured out how to pull it off with memorable humor. Jesus' teaching for this 23rd Week in Ordinary Time concludes a series of Jesus' wild and witty ideas [Matthew 18:1-14]. After telling the disciples that the humble are the greatest in God's sight, Jesus launched into exaggeration and wordplay.

He suggested that it would be better to drown with a 200-pound millstone necklace than to set a stumbling block before the simple. As if that weren't enough, he asserted that people should cut off their hands or pluck out their eyes rather than let those body parts lead them to sin [see Matthew 18:1-14]. Then, while everyone was laughing nervously at his absurd images, he hit them with a serious challenge: "If your brother or sister sins" [Matthew 18:15-20]. In other words: "You are responsible for one another and must do everything possible to help others find their way."

What did folks think upon hearing that? Suppose the listener were someone without much social status — perhaps a woman? To what does Jesus call her? First, he suggests that she be a whistleblower, telling perpetrators how she views their behavior. If she gets no results, she's supposed to risk sharing her assessment with others — perhaps people with greater social status. This step entails the chance that they could dismiss her or decide that the cost of saying something is too great. Still, by the grace of God, they might agree and join her crusade.

What would lead others to join with her? They, like she, would need a twofold motivation. First, they would need to perceive the wrong in the situation. Secondly, they would need the commitment and hope to believe that something better is possible.

Note: Jesus is not proposing a law-and-order solution. There's no mention of punishment here. It's all aimed at a conversion of mind and heart — including the humbling possibility that the confronter herself might change her viewpoint.

It is also an innately communal activity. If the whistleblower and the perpetrator do not agree, a larger group is responsible to discern and speak out. Finally, if no agreement comes from that, the community simply accepts the fact that the "perpetrator" cannot change enough to be in communion with them. There's no winner or loser, but there is a clarification of values. Those who see something wrong must continue to practice their convictions — whether or not it is convenient and whether or not others agree with them.

Today? As we enter into the *Season of Creation*, public figures — including Colbert and Francis — call our attention to climate change as "one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day." Like Ezekiel the disturber, Francis reminds us in *laudato Si'*: "As often occurs in periods of deep crisis which require bold decisions, we are tempted to think that what is happening is not entirely clear," but "this is the way human beings contrive to feed their self-destructive vices: trying not to see them, delaying the important decisions and pretending that nothing will happen."

In this second week of the *2023 Season of Creation*, we are called to take up our vocation as creation's caretakers without delay. Like someone who calls out an offender, we must disturb the peace and implement real systemic change. It's either that or usher in the impending doom.

If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts [Psalm 95]!

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



grace and blessing. That person is extracting her and his gifts and person from the community. This is true for couples, families, parishes and the larger groupings. What remains important is to make sure that a person's actions are "sinful" or injurious to them and others, or just a difference from the way I would live.

What Jesus is asking of us is to do the "tough-love" of revealing ourselves and our love by bringing about harmony rather than our personal "clean-freak" orderliness. It is easy to love what we approve, but Christian love is deeper than approval. We can think that we are loving by allowing. We are not everybody's conscience, but we are a Eucharistic people; we are sent to bring about Christ's kingdom even in the messy kitchens of life. —taken from the writings of Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR:

Paul's letter to the Church at Rome 13:8-10] is all about the centrality of love in the Christian life. Paul tells us that the commandments prohibiting adultery, murder, theft and coveting are summed up in the saying "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This commandment — taken from Leviticus 19:18 — is "the fulfillment of the law."

The word love is a translation of the Greek word "agape," which is used in a Christian context to refer to the love God shares with us, and, by extension, the self-sacrificing effort we make to do good for others. This love is not a vague feeling, but a concrete effort to come to the aid of those in need — as suggested by the parable of the Good Samaritan [see Luke 10]. We are to do good for others not simply because we like them or we owe them or we feel good doing it, but because this is our Christian calling to follow the command and example of our Lord. All other human beings qualify as our neighbor — including family and friends as well as enemies and those who are very different. True love is never self-satisfied. On the contrary, it recognizes the continuing call to deepen and extend our desires and our efforts to do good for others and to meet their needs.

We can imagine ways Christians could respond positively to Paul's message. A married couple who regularly pray together could do a better job of helping each other stay in shape through proper diet and regular exercise. A teacher who cares for all her students could give special attention to the boy with a learning disability. A concerned citizen who votes intelligently could get more involved in advocating for humane treatment of refugees and immigrants. A grandmother who is generally good to her grandchildren could spend extra time with her grandson who is struggling in high school. A factory worker who tries to be a force for good at the worksite could reach out to the fellow worker who is hard to get along with.

What could you do to deepen and extend your efforts to love your neighbor?

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

A PRAYER:

Dear Lord: Today I thought of the words of Vincent van Gogh: "It is true there is an ebb and flow, but the sea remains the sea." You are the sea. Although I experience many ups and downs in my emotions, and often feel great shifts and changes in my inner life, you remain the same. Your sameness is not the sameness of a rock, but the sameness of a faithful lover. Out of your love I came to life, by your love I am sustained, and to your love I am always called back. There are days of sadness and days of joy; there are feelings of guilt and feelings of gratitude; there are moments of failure and moments of success; but all of them are embraced by your unwavering love. O Lord, sea of love and goodness, let me not fear too much the storms and winds of my daily life, and let me know there is ebb and flow but the sea remains the sea.

—Henri Nouwen



THE REASSURANCE OF JESUS:

Matthew's Gospel for this 23rd Week in Ordinary Time [Matthew 18:15-20] contains three distinct sections that appear to be quite unrelated. If we find ourselves a bit puzzled as to why these three disjointed segments of Christ's teaching were put together, then we first ought to spend a little time considering just how the Gospels were composed.

We have to understand that the Gospels were written some years after the events that they describe. If you look up Wikipedia, you will see that many scholars reckon that Matthew's Gospel was not written earlier than 85 AD — almost fifty years after the death of Christ. The earliest they think is Mark which is dated about 70 AD.

However, none of the Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles — which is essentially the second part of Luke's Gospel — mentions the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. And since this was something prophesied by Jesus, you would think that the fulfilment of his prophecy might have been mentioned. So, some of the more traditional theologians argue for an earlier date and tend to think that this proves that all the Gospels must have been written before 70 AD.

Whenever they were written, we realize that it likely to have been at least twenty, or possibly thirty or more years, after the death of Christ. The Gospel writers must, however, have used as their source material many of the stories told about Jesus either in written form or orally given by the original witnesses.

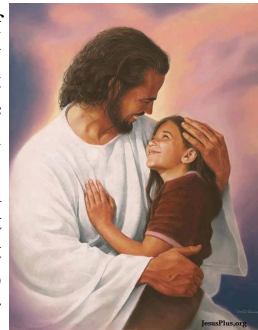
We surmise that these separate stories of particular incidents in the life of Christ were certainly circulating within the Christian community in those early years. Most of these accounts would have been factually based, but some might have been a bit more fanciful, and it was the Evangelist's job to sort out the true from the false and to put this vast amount of material together in a coherent and credible way.

That's why we end up with sections of the Gospel — such as the one in Matthew's Gospel — which have three separate pieces of Christ's teaching put together as if they were spoken on the same day at the same time. But just looking at it, we can see that they are completely unrelated to each other as were unlikely to have been originally one unit. This should not undermine our faith in the integrity of the Gospels, but rather give us an insight into how they were actually composed. We can regard the Evangelists as being under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as they went about the process of editing the various stories and accounts of the life of Jesus that were handed down to them.

And so, we begin with Jesus addressing a very unsettling problem that existed within the early Christian Community. Basically, Jesus provides a template of how to deal with the situation if a member of the Church is found to be doing something contrary to the Gospel. The words of Jesus provide a procedure to use in such a situation. What he tells us to do is fairly obvious, and it follows what we might call the rules of natural justice. Nevertheless, the fact that these words are spoken by Jesus gives the members of the Church reassurance on how to proceed.

Then Jesus begins speaking about "binding and loosing." It is curious because Jesus had already spoken about this with Peter [see Matthew 16] when he told Peter that he would give him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Possibly these words are repeated because this time they are addressed to the community, and not just to an individual. We know that these words are the origin of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and so it is important that they are repeated and said to all the disciples. It is crucial that there should be no ambiguity and that this ministry of reconciliation is not restricted to Peter but involves all of the disciples.

Finally, Jesus speaks about "where two or three gathered in the name of Jesus having their prayers granted." This is interesting. It seems to refer back to something that Jesus had said earlier: "Ask and it



artist, the more divine energy that seeps through, the easier it is to mistake the image of God for its reality — which is always the definition of idolatry.

The heart has its reasons. So too do pride, idolatry, lust, greed, anger, and concupiscence. God built us in a rather unsafe way. To walk the earth like gods and goddesses is, in fact, a dangerous business. Fortunately God knew this before he made us and, like an understanding mother who has mused on the origins of her children's faults, still took that risk and now blushes just a little as she looks at us and our foibles and faults. —taken from the writings Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., which appear on the internet.

GOD IS MERCY:

The older we become, the more we realize how limited we are in our ability to love, how impure our hearts are, and how complex our motivations are. And there is a real temptation to want to look inside of ourselves and clean it all out, and become people with a pure heart, unstained intentions, and unconditional love. Such an attempt is doomed to failure and leads us to ever greater despair. The more we look into ourselves and try to figure ourselves out, the more we become entangled in our own imperfections. Indeed, we cannot save ourselves. Only Jesus can save us. That is why it is so important to remove your inner eye away from the complexities of your own broken heart toward the pure but broken heart of Jesus. Looking at him and his immense mercy will give you the ability to accept your own imperfections and to really let yourself be cared for by the mercy and love of Jesus.

I remember how Thomas Merton once wrote: "God is mercy in mercy in mercy." This means that the more we come to know ourselves, the more we come to know God's mercy, which is beyond the mercy we know. Letting go of the desire to be perfect lovers, and allowing God to love our people through us, that is the great spiritual call that is given to you and to me. There in the pure heart of God, embraced by his unconditional love, you will find the true joy and peace your heart is longing for.

—Henri Nouwen

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].



Reconciliation

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.

**SPEAK OUT FOR CREATION:**

On Sept. 22, 2021, Stephen Colbert and six other late-night TV hosts featured climate change in their programs. Among other things, Colbert admitted: "I'm a great hypocrite. I'll never do anything that's inconvenient to me. That's why there has to be systemic change, to make everyone make the right choices, not the easy ones." It's not often that comedians sound like they just read a papal document, but that night, entertainers were all but citing Pope Francis' encyclical *laudato Si': On the Care for Our Common Home*.

Today we hear God tell Ezekiel to be a "watchman" for Israel [Ezekiel 33:1-9]. Now, watchmen

FAULTS OF THE PARENTS IN THE CHILDREN:

A couple of years ago, I was at the home of some friends for a dinner. During the meal, their kids — all quite young — had been rather loud, cranky, self-absorbed, and unmannered, as is the way sometimes with young children and with the ups and downs of the dinner table. After the meal, when they'd left to play in an adjoining room, the mother, tired and frustrated from her battle of wills with them, made this comment: "Sometimes when I look at my kids, I blush with a kind of shame because I see myself in their faults! I know exactly from where they get all of that! It's in their genes. I see my faults inside of them. The good thing is that, seeing this, triggers a real compassion in me. I want to hug them and apologize!"

There's a wonderful theology in that observation. The way she felt, looking at her children and their faults, is the way God that must feel as he looks at us, his kids, with our unmannered faults and our self-absorption. God is like that mother. No doubt God experiences the same frustration in his battle of wills with us. But, no doubt too, God fills with compassion and understanding in the face of our faults, blushing with a little shame for how he made us. Like that mother, God sees exactly where all of this comes from and who and what is responsible for those congenital propensities.

If we sense inside us infinite love, is it any wonder that we sometimes fill with lust and want to make love to the whole world. Simply said, though a lot of nuance is immediately needed once it is said, so many of our faults stem from the way God made us — namely, from the divine fire, divine appetites, divine energy, and godly grandiosity that God has put inside us. Our faults take their root there.

That can sound like blasphemy, but it's quite the opposite really. It's not an attempt to blame God for our faults, but rather an effort to explain, more deeply, why we are as we are, why we have tendencies towards sinful and destructive things, why life is so infinitely complex, and, most important of all, why God was not a stingy, small-minded, small-hearted, petty, defensive creator when she made us.

When God made us, he didn't play it safe — making us small, stupid, mechanical, easy to control, low-risk projects. God rolled the dice and risked the highest possible stakes — love and freedom. God gave us as much as he could give without making us, ourselves, gods and goddesses — the one thing God can't do. God made us godly — almost divine — and that has consequences.

God is infinite, the creator of everything, self-sufficient Being, and Being who, in a manner of speaking, owns everything that is — all beauty, all love, all truth, all existence, and even all pleasure. That's a lot to carry without losing one's balance. God never loses his balance, but we, who have been given so much divine dignity and energy, often do.

And that's the problem — if we sense within us a divine likeness, is it any wonder that sometimes we inflate with grandiosity and strut with pride; if we sense inside us infinite love, is it any wonder that we sometimes fill with lust and want to make love to the whole world; if we sense within us God's holding all of being in existence, is it any wonder that we are often greedy and jealous, convinced like the mythical gods of old that we have first rights to sleep with everyone and that the whole world is really ours; if we sense within us the ecstasy of fulfillment that is inside of God, is it any wonder that we tend to excess and addictions, that we would want to swallow all the food, drink, and pleasure in the world and do nothing other than drink in its enjoyment; and if we sense that we are godly in nature, is it any wonder that we fill so easily with hatred and murderous rage when we are slighted or ignored?

We see this crystal-clear in some of its higher expressions. For example, in our experience of creativity. Why do so many great artists have such a temptation towards atheism or various forms of idolatry? It's no great mystery. The greater the talent, the greater the work produced, the greater the



will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" [see Matthew 7].

Jesus certainly encourages us to ask the Father for the things we need, and promises that what we ask for will be granted. You might think that this is very bold of Jesus — promising unequivocally that our requests will be granted. And you might also wonder if Jesus' promise can be relied upon — perhaps remembering some things that you asked for that were not granted.

This is a tricky issue. Some people might say that you ought only to ask for proper things; that would rule out praying for a pay rise or praying for something that might be immoral or to other people's disadvantage. But Jesus makes no such qualification. However, we do know that prayer changes us. We know that we might start by praying for one particular thing but end up asking for another.

A priest once told me that when he was a teenager he prayed very hard for a motorcycle, but never got one. Years later — after he was ordained — he was sent as a missionary to Africa. When he got there, the Bishop said that he had no money to provide him with a Land Rover but instead was able to give him a motorcycle. Fifteen years after the event his prayers were answered — but certainly not in the way he expected!

I think that we ought to look at intercessory prayer in the same way as that priest learned to do. We ought to see the whole picture, and not think in the short term. We might, for example, pray very hard for healing for a particular person — not realizing that because of that illness a whole family had started to pull together and were acting as a family unit for the first time. The healing came not to the individual, but to them all as a family.

Not only that, but the sick person might have found great meaning and purpose in their life as a result of the suffering they had to undergo. Even if it brought about their early death their illness may have been the very thing that brought them to experience salvation. And what deeper healing could there be than that.

These things are a great mystery. But Christ is clear — ask and it will be given to you. And then there is another very important point — praying with others is more powerful than praying alone. We would do well to remember this.

Jesus concludes by reminding us that whenever we gather in his name he is with us. What greater consolation could we have that this? What greater comfort could we have than knowing that he is here with us right now?

—taken from the writings of Father Alex McAllister S.D.S., which appear on the internet

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — SEPTEMBER 19th:

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.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

If being a Christian could be accomplished with words and an empty name, if Christendom could regulate itself as it desired, if Christ would take pleasure in what pleases them, and the cross itself were to be sustained by means of the ugly sword, then rulers and subjects, indeed, most of the world, would probably be Christians.

—Peter Walpot

THE FRUITS OF VULNERABILITY:

The Scripture Readings for this 23rd Week in Ordinary Time could not be more blunt. God appoints Ezekiel to listen for the word of God and then speak it to Israel. God says that if Ezekiel speaks the word, he will live, and if he does not speak the word, he will die [Ezekiel 33:1-9]. The simple crudeness of this message emphasizes the importance of hearing the word of God and proclaiming it to others. We could not live or grow as a Christian community if we lost the ability to hear what God is saying to us in the events of our time and discern what response God is calling us to make. The more significant those events are, the more it is important for us to ask, what God is saying to us within them.

This truth has special relevance this week as our nation recalls the tragic events of September 11th. Over the next few days there will once again be memorials, concerts, analyses and television news items that mark this anniversary. But what you and I are called to do is the same thing that Ezekiel was called to do — to ask ourselves, “What is God saying to us in these tragic events that happened now almost a little more than a decade ago?” To discover that, I think there are two questions we must address: “How has our life changed since September 11th?” and “What is God telling us in that change?”

The first question can be answered rather simply. How has our life changed since terrorist activities have happened on our shores? We all now recognize how vulnerable we are. We now recognize that there are forces in the world intent upon harming us on our own soil. Think of all the precautions that have entered our lives when we board a plane. There is much more security in large public gatherings; we worry more about the people we love. Vulnerability is the common denominator that ties us together in light of September 11th. We recognize that we are not as safe as we’d like to be and that we must live our life with more exposure, more risk.

Now, different people take different approaches to this vulnerability. Politicians want to pass laws that they say will make us safer. Military experts devise strategies that are meant to neutralize those who would attack us. Entrepreneurs create products that play upon our insecurities. But what you and I as believers in Christ are called to ask is this: “What is God telling us in this vulnerability that we now experience together?”

That, of course, is the second question. What is God telling us and calling us to do in the vulnerability which now characterizes our society? I would suggest that God is calling us to sympathy and to sacrifice. When we feel vulnerable, a common reaction is to pull back in fear. When we feel less safe, we’re inclined to close ourselves down — to shrink the experiences we’re willing to risk, to live less and less. The word of God calls us in a different direction — rather than calling us to fear, it calls us to sympathy.

We more clearly now all know the fragility of life. Back then, we saw lives of thousands end in a few moments on our television screens, and we continue to see many people lose their lives in the senseless shootings taking place within our nation. That vulnerability can lead us to a deeper compassion for all who suffer. That vulnerability can allow pain of others to touch us. Whenever we allow our vulnerability to connect us to others and identify us with those who suffer, we are allowing the word of God to speak to us.

God’s word calls us to sympathy, but it also calls us to sacrifice. In light of these events, we know now the preciousness of life in a new way, and we are more aware that if life is going to continue, it needs committed people who are dedicated to preserve it and promote it.

It is true that our vulnerability can paralyze us and deflate us. It can also lead us to sacrifice — to the willingness to give ourselves to others. If our world is less safe, we need now, more than ever, parents willing to sacrifice for their children, friends willing to sacrifice for each other, citizens willing to give of themselves for their neighbor. Vulnerability can lead to paralysis. It can also lead to



Church. If it doesn’t, well, then we need to pray for him. The doors of the Church are always open — if he’s ready to re-consider his ways, he certainly will be welcome back. The bottom line is that we need to remember that the words: “I am not my brother’s keeper” — were spoken by a sinful man, Cain [see Genesis 4:9]. People of God recognize their responsibility towards each other.

Jesus reminds us that as members of a faith community we are accountable to each other. Quite often, we miss this. We might consider ourselves accountable to God, but we don’t consider the effect our actions have on each other. What we are overlooking is that God is present in the community. The Church is the Body of Christ. When we sin, we are sinning against the Body of Christ. If we hurt another person, we are offending Christ within that other person as well as offending the entire Christian community. If we claim we are Christian, we have a responsibility to all other Christians to behave in a Christian way. We are accountable to each other, and to all others in the Church.

We are better people when we sense the deep responsibility we have towards each other. You husbands and wives are better people because you treasure each other and choose your actions based on your love for your spouse. You parents don’t let bad things into your homes because you are raising God’s children. You Teens keep the garbage out of your lives because you are in love with Love, with God, and are looking forward to the future He is preparing for you. And all of us in ministry continually change our behavior for the sake of those to whom we minister, as well as the Ultimate One we serve.

Have you ever seen a roof being held up by massive wooden beams? These beams are made of small pieces of wood. The small pieces of wood are laminated into a powerful structure, capable of holding an immense weight. This is a good analogy of the importance each of us have in the Body of Christ, the Church. We are those little pieces of wood. We can each hold only a little weight — not all that much. But when we are united together, and united with Jesus, we can hold the weight of the world.

We come to Church every week to form a community of prayer. None of us can form a community alone. We need each other to form community. We come and pray as a community to the One who is our head and our heart. And we ask Him to protect us from the evils of the world, outside us and within us. We pray to God to bind us together into the community of love.

We need each other, and we need Jesus. And we have each other. And we have Jesus. We are the Body of Christ. We are the Church.

—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, September 2]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-i]----- \$ 246.05

Offerings-----[Sunday, September 3]----- \$ 325.00

Offerings-----[Monday, September 4]-----[Labor Day]----- \$ 20.00

SEEKING MEANING:

Whenever we yearn for meaning, feel tired and overwhelmed, become uncertain about the direction of our lives, or simply need to feel loved, know that god always awaits us in the Eucharist. As long as we never tire of seeking Him there, we will find exactly what our souls need.

—Bobby Angel

OUR BROTHER'S KEEPERS:

Do you remember studying in American History about rugged individualism? The early pioneers — like Daniel Boone — wanted to live apart from everyone, dealing with nature and life alone. They didn't like it if someone moved in a mere ten miles away. They wanted more elbow room.

All this made for good reading, but it was more poetic than reality. The early pioneers needed each other for protection, for help, and for support. When the Native Americans attacked, the settlers had to unite for their own protection. When Mrs. Boone was about to have a baby, she needed Mrs. Crockett's help. We are communal — we depend on each other for support, for help, for strength. This is obvious as we respond to each other's natural needs and crises. We also need each other for our spiritual lives. Jesus did not establish a federation of individuals — He established a Church. He called upon us to unite as one person, one body — the Body of Christ. He knew that we would be infinitely stronger united. He promised He would be with us.

Matthew's Gospel is sometimes called the Dissertation on the Church [Matthew 18:15-20]. It is quite realistic. It talks about the way we deal with people whose sinful ways are destroying themselves and hurting the community — "If your brother or sister sins against you, go to them and tell them. If that doesn't work, go again with friends to support you. If that doesn't work, ask the whole Church for help with them, and so forth."

Here are some examples. Let's make believe you sing in the choir, and so does your next-door neighbor, Simon Snodgrass. Now Simon is a single man, and that's a good thing because he really doesn't like children. He's often grumpy around them — even when they come to his door selling girl scout cookies or what have you. Well, maybe you can live with that. You certainly don't need to have your children going to his house on Halloween. What you can't live with is when your ten-year-old daughter tells you that Mr. Snodgrass called her a bad name after she tried to get your dog from his front lawn. So you go over to Snodgrass and you tell him that it is unacceptable for him to use bad language around your daughter — and even more to direct it to her. You tell him that you are sorry about the dog and will do your best to make sure that doesn't happen again, but you add that if something your children do upsets him, he should just give you a call and you'll take care of it. Snodgrass, now calls you a few choice ones.

The next Sunday, there he is at Mass, singing in the choir — all holy and spiritual.

A week or so later, your son's football lands in his backyard. Your son, rings his doorbell and politely asks if he can get the football. Snodgrass is enraged and lets the boy know it. He also teaches him a few words you really didn't want your son to learn. So, you call a few of the other guys in the choir and you all go over to his house, and you say: "Listen, Snoddy, I know children can bother you, but you can't be losing your temper with them and calling them names. We're sure you work hard and have a bit of stress, but you have to learn how to control it." Snodgrass's reaction is even worse. But you let it go, hoping he'll reconsider his actions.

Then there is a third incident, and again Snodgrass goes ballistic on the children.

You and the other guys decide to ask your parish priest to intervene. When you approach him, your pastor says: "I really think Fr. Brian needs this experience." Anyway, after the choir Mass, Fr. Brian says to Snodgrass: "I heard that there are some problems between you and your neighbors. Everybody is here now. Let's get together in my office and hash this out." After everyone has their say, Fr. Brian tells Snodgrass that he hopes he will do a better job controlling his temper. Sadly, Snodgrass tells everyone where to go and how to get there. The result is that Father has to say: "Look, you can't be coming here, singing in the choir, acting all holy and then be verbally attacking little children. It's wrong, and not the behavior we can condone among the members of our Church. Can't you just try to get your temper under control?"

Maybe this will all lead to Snodgrass's changing his life because he wants to be a true member of the



commitment. Whenever we allow our vulnerability to lead us to sacrifice for the people we love and the principles we believe in, we are responding to the word of God speaking to us.

As we join with other Americans during this time, we as Christians must remind ourselves what God is telling us through the events of our time. You and I are indeed more vulnerable than we were before; but if we can allow that vulnerability to lead us to sympathy and sacrifice, we will take something that is evil and allow God to bring goodness out of it.

Yes, we are not as safe as we wish we were. But if we hear God's word in these tragic events and proclaim it to one another, we will know that we are not alone. Moreover, we can claim for ourselves a place within that blunt promised made to Ezekiel, believing that God will not lead us to death but to life.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: Colossians 1:24-3:3, Luke 6:6-11

Tuesday: Colossians 2:6-15, Luke 6:12-19

Wednesday: Colossians 3:1-11, Luke 6:20-26

Thursday: Numbers 21:4-9, Philippians 2:6-11, John 3:13-17

Friday: Judith 13:17-20, Hebrews 5:7-9, Luke 2:33-35

Saturday: 1 Timothy 1:15-17, Luke 6:43-49

24th Week in Ordinary Time: Sirach 27:30-28:7, Romans 14:7-9, Matthew 18:21-35

THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND ACTIVE:

Scripture is sacramental. Jesus, the Word, speaks to us through the Bible — the word. There is a mystery here which the human mind cannot plumb. There are certain things we can say that are not true. We can say, for instance, that a book made of paper and ink is not the thing that is "living and active" and that this book, all by itself, does not discern "the thoughts and intentions of the heart." On the other hand, we cannot say that Scripture is "just a book" any more than we can say that the Eucharist is just a collection of atoms or that Jesus of Nazareth is just another homo sapiens. We are bound to say, in fact, that it is the word of God, inspired by the Spirit of him who is the Word and capable of changing hearts and lives. We find ourselves confronted, once again, with the mystery of the Incarnation — of God's choice to manifest himself in a human way and through human things [including books]. So let us approach Scripture as we approach the Eucharist — in the full awareness that we are standing in the presence of something mysterious, holy and full of the power of God, since it is the inspired word of God. Let us take Scripture into our hearts as we take the Eucharist into our bodies. And let us let that word guide, judge and heal us with all the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in the Church and with submission to that Spirit and that Church. It will do the work that God sent it to do!

HOPE:

Hope locates itself in the premises that we don't know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act.

—Rebecca Solnit

WHY DO WE YAWN?

Why do we yawn? The yawn has to be one of the most fascinating of all physical reactions. Notice I said “physical” and not “human” reactions, because even cats, dogs and fish yawn. A yawn is an involuntary reflex. Many scientists assert that we yawn when our “state of alertness” is changing, which is why we yawn when we are tired or bored or when we are waking up, for instance. What’s more interesting to me, though, is what happens when someone else yawns.

Yawns are contagious. Have you ever noticed that? But why are yawns contagious? Sneezing isn’t contagious. Coughing isn’t contagious. Burping is only contagious if you live in a fraternity house. So, why are yawns contagious?

Some professionals claim we yawn to subconsciously communicate, and to synchronize our behavior with others around us. Some others say that it is to remove excess carbon dioxide that has built up within us, and doing so sets off a chain reaction. Still others claim that it has to do with sensory perception citing that even if we don’t see it, even hearing a yawn elicits a similar reaction. Regardless, we yawn as our alertness and perceptions change.

So, that’s “why” we yawn, but what are we yawning at? Sometimes it’s Mass. Other times, it’s work. Most of the time, we yawn at plain, old life. But life is not boring. If life has become boring, it is because we have allowed it to become boring, because we have not been using our imaginations or our gifts. You have a gift to GIVE, but the gift is not your own. Stick with me, here.

Do you realize that the only thing about you or me that is totally and completely ours is our SIN? That’s right. Every single talent, skill, blessing and ability within you and within me were put there by God. Although we often take the credit, He deserves it. Even if you have trained or worked your whole life “refining” your natural talents, the ability is still a gift from God — even that work ethic and self-control to refine them are traits that were bestowed upon you by God.

Your talents are gifts from God, but your sin — that’s all you.

Often, we yawn at life because we have not been following our vocation. Put simply, our boredom with our own situation in life is because the life we’re living is not the one He designed us to live. That translates to a life spent breathing instead of living.

The question shouldn’t be: “are you yawning at Mass, at life or, even, at God?” The question ought to be: “Is God yawning at you?”

The next question is: “is your yawning, your boredom, becoming contagious in your home, job or life?”

If your life is boring, start with yourself. What gifts or talents has God blessed you with that are not being shared? Maybe you’re really good with organization, or at building things with your hands, or with decorating — I’ll bet your church could use some help in one of their ministries. Maybe you’re a great listener, a talented communicator, or you’re willing to dig in and get your hands dirty. There are people beyond your parish walls who would benefit from the gift of your time and talent. Maybe you don’t feel like you have many talents or experiences that others would find helpful — that’s where you are wrong. God gives people different talents and skills for a reason, that we might share them and bless others with them. Doing so, blesses God back for those talents He placed within you.

Yes, yawns are contagious, just like negativity. So use your yawn to change your alertness to the world around you [God’s Kingdom on earth] and think bigger.

Generosity is contagious. Enthusiasm is contagious. Joy is contagious. Selfless service can become contagious, too.



And even if it doesn't become contagious in your home, parish or community right away — give it time, it will. At least by sharing your gifts with the world, you insure that you won't be yawning from boredom — only from a tiring day spent glorifying God by giving back to Him what was His to begin with — your very self.

As St. Peter reminds us: “Each one has received a gift; use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace” [1 Peter 4:10]. You can spread the yawn, or you can spread the love. Life will be as boring as you make it, so go for a run, brew some coffee and get to work.

—the Bible Geek

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. 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].



COMPASSIONATE CONTEMPLATION:

Sitting silent and still in meditation, walking with attentive gratitude at sunset, reaching out to cup the beloved’s face in our hands, we find ourselves once again at the never-ending origins of the one unending present moment in which our lives unfold.

We know by experience that in a relative, but very real sense, we are the arbiters of our journey — that we must take responsibility to cooperate with the grace of being faithful to our contemplative practices. If we do not meditate there will be no meditation in our lives. If we do not patiently work through the obstacles encountered along the way, we can lose our way and lose ourselves in the process. But at a deeper level, the entire journey is one in which we are called over and over again to surrender to a self-transforming process not of our own making. Each time we give ourselves over to our contemplative practices, whatever they might be, we find ourselves, once again, one with the communal mystery in which there is no separate self.

Finley reminds us that solitary contemplative paths simultaneously invite us to respond with compassion to real world needs: “Ideally speaking, a commitment to contemplative living is synonymous with a heightened awareness of and response to the real suffering of real people. The difficulty however, is that our own wounded ego can circle about contemplative experiences in ways that make us less, not more sensitive to our own real needs and the needs of those around us. Religious faith, artistic inspiration, romantic-sexual love, the process of psychological healing, and all other arenas of contemplative experience and self-transformation, can and should be arenas of heightened compassionate sensitivity to the real needs of those around us.

Contemplative wisdom discerns that we hinder ourselves in our ongoing self-transformation when we catch ourselves expounding, through clenched teeth, the principles of a dance that our own self-absorbed rigidity will not let us dance. But no matter how foolish and broken we may be, compassionate love is always ready to drain the fear-based rigidity out of the situation to the point that we might begin to recognize our ever present invitation to join in the general dance of God, one with us in our brokenness. The dance never ceases to stir within us, beating “in our very blood whether we want it to or not.” The dance is deathless, childlike, and free; an infinite Presence wholly poured out in and as the concrete immediacy of who we simply are, beyond grasping in any way whatsoever.

—Father Richard Rohr, O.F.M.