

CLOSING PRAYER:

**~ Prayer of Care
for Our Common Home ~**

God of all,
Creator of the universe,
You entrusted your world
to us as a gift.
Help us to care for it
and all people,
that we may live in right relationship —
with You, with ourselves,
with one another, and with creation.

Christ our Lord,
both divine and human,
You lived among us
and died for our sins.
Help us to imitate
your love for the human family
by recognizing that we are all connected—
to our brothers and sisters around the world,
to those in poverty
impacted by environmental devastation,
and to future generations.

Holy Spirit,
giver of wisdom and love,
You breathe life in us
and guide us.
Help us to live according to your vision,
stirring to action the hearts of all —
individuals and families,
communities of faith,
and civil and political leaders.

Triune God,
help us to hear the cry of those in poverty,
and the cry of the earth,
so that we may together
care for our common home.
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.

**FAITH EDUCATION — SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1st:**

Our Faith Education classes have begun. If you have missed registering for these classes, please make sure that you complete this registration with Patty in the chapel office this week. **Classes will meet from 8:45 AM until 9:45 AM and will be followed by our 10 AM Mass.** Please see our Website for dates upon which the classes will meet. Please join us as we come together to begin our faith journey for this year by entering into prayer and worship together following class, at our 10 am Mass. **If you have not registered your child, please contact Patty in the Chapel office as soon as possible [440-473-3560].** Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.

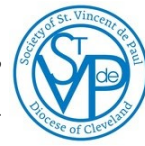
**BLESSING OF ANIMALS — OCTOBER 1st:**

On **Sunday, October 1st**, 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 outside in the Grotto area right outside the Chapel.

We will also be having Coffee & Donuts outdoors to help us celebrate St. Francis and our pets. Spend some time relaxing with Family and Friends after Mass. **If it rains on this day, the event will be postponed until the following Sunday.** We hope you can join us!

**BLANKET SUNDAY IS APPROACHING:**

The 37th Annual Blanket Sunday in-parish appeal kicks off the weekend of **October 14-15, 2023**. Last year, funds from the appeal were used to purchase 5,400+ new winter blankets that were provided to people experiencing homelessness, and 138 beds/mattresses for low-income individuals and families throughout Northeast Ohio. The need is great and donations can be made securely online: <https://svdpcl.org/donate/blanket-sunday-donations/>. Checks may also be mailed to: **St. Vincent de Paul Society Blanket Sunday, 1404 East 9th Street — 3rd Floor, Cleveland, OH 44114.** Thank you for helping us “blanket” neighbors in warmth and compassion!

**WOMEN'S DAY OF RETREAT — SAVE THE DATE:**

Tuesday, October 24th from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM. We will begin with Mass together in the Chapel, and then move to the Lennon Boardroom to continue our prayer and reflection together. **Father John** will facilitate our evening of reflection. **There is no cost for the evening.** [If you can't make it for Mass, come anyway when you can.] It will be a wonderful evening of spiritual renewal. So **mark the date on your calendars** and give yourself a treat in the Lord. **Sign up on the retreat sheet which is located on the easel in the narthex of the Chapel, or call [440-473-3560].**

**ANNUAL SOCK DRIVE:**

Sophomore, Javi Swinarski, has organized a **Sock Drive to collect socks for the homeless and shelterless men and women in our city.** Javi has been doing this since he was in the 4th grade. Every year, he has increased the size and scope of his project. **This year's drive runs from Saturday, October 14th until Sunday, October 29th.** Javi remarks: “Something as little as a pair of warm socks can change a person's life.” Javi will have collection bins in the narthex of the chapel. Please donate. Thank you.

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 mental health issues.
- For Shirley Smith, sister-in-law of Brother Charles Smith, who is critically ill and under the care of hospice.
- For Marion Greene, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Laura Pizmoht, mother of Francie [‘28] and Jane [‘31] Pizmoht, who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Loretta Seidl, sister of Brother Robert Lavelle, C.S.C., who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For Father Gerry Papen, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for severe pneumonia
- For Alfred Pinchak, father of Anna [‘96], Cyril [‘02], Andrea [‘02] Pinchak, father-in-law of Ernie Corvi [‘02], who is seriously ill.
- For Brother Ed Libbers, C.S.C., who is in rehab following a serious illness.
- For Elizabeth Toth, daughter of Jeffrey Toth [‘84], nephew of James [‘86] and Jennifer [‘94]. And cousin of Tim [‘24] and Kate [‘27] Papczun, who is undergoing treatment for a serious health issue.

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Michael Feeney, grandfather of Eddie [‘25] and Abbey [‘27] Steiner.
- For Allee Bell, Sr., grandfather of AJ [‘26] and Lauren [‘28] Bell.
- For Mary Dolores Dean, grandmother of Father Peter McCormick, C.S.C.
- For Gertrude Gramaldi, mother-in-law of Lacrosse Coach, Brian Jenkins.
- 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.
- For Brother Roger Berg, C.S.C.
- For Susan Zidanic, family friend of Athletic Director, Sean O’Toole.
- For Robert Riffin, grandfather of Ethan [‘18] and Aidan [‘20] Muchnicki.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For the victims of the excessive flooding in Libya
- 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.

WISDOM:

Let us expand the boundaries of our gaze, so that we may be able to see the good in others and be capable of broadening our horizons, and let us also open our heart to grow and expand, in order to understand, to be close to every person and every civilization.

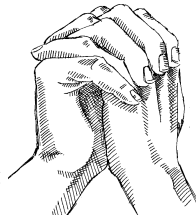
—Pope Francis

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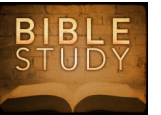
PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- 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 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, OCTOBER 11th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, October 11th 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 — Part 2

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, October 1: 26 th Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, October 2: Guardian Angels	NO MASS
Tuesday, October 3:	NO MASS
Wednesday, October 4: St. Francis of Assisi	NO MASS
Thursday, October 5:	NO MASS
Friday, October 6:	NO MASS
Saturday, October 7: 27 th Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, October 8: 27 th 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.



GENEROSITY:

Our call to generosity is so empowering. It is the key to success in any occupation or endeavor.

—Anna Costa

A REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

CS Lewis once wrote that the most emphatic noise is the one you are trying not to listen to. The TV is on very loud next to my room, dogs are barking across the street, and you expect me to write something profound? If the program were a ball game, and the dog was mine, it would not be noisy, but just delightful sounds accompanying my spirits. The more important noises are those already bouncing around the insides of us all. We are invited to listen to and acknowledge those “bangings” and “clangings”. We actually live not only with the noises, but also we live with what is the origin of them. When we are at peace deep-down, sounds are less of an annoyance.

It is the noises within us that lead to the choices that we make. The Scripture Readings for this 26th Week in Ordinary Time are all about making good choices. God speaks to the prophet, Ezekiel about fairness. If we do the right thing, that’s good, even if we have previously not done the right thing. We are capable of making good choices, even if we previously made bad choices. We are capable of doing the right thing, even if we didn’t in the past. We can change our minds, change direction, and do the right thing. But it works both ways. If we choose to do the wrong things — even if we have previously done the right thing — we are culpable for those bad choices as well.

We choose between right and wrong — we know the voices we pay attention to. We know the difference; we make our own choice, and we have to take responsibility for those choices. And our choices are actions and responsibilities. We can’t just say the right thing; we have to put action behind it.

The Eucharist brings together all these noises. Perhaps they are invitations to receive the truths and falsehoods which those noises promote and reveal. Thus, God’s call to us is to resist the evil deeds of our own self-will and focus on doing the will of God. Every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we ask that God’s will will be done in our lives as that will is in “heaven.” This is an easy prayer to learn and recite, but not that easy to live out in our every day.

Life is promised to those who hear and do what is right. Death is promised to those who choose “sin.” We strive for the freedom and openness to God’s call and the invitation to live gracefully in the tension between our strong wills and God’s gentle, but insistent stomping on our toes.

The prophet Ezekiel tells us that there is life for those who choose righteousness, and death for those who do not [Ezekiel 18:20-29]. Israel accuses God of not being fair. God is not fair? God reverses this thinking, and asks the House of Israel if their ways are the “unfair” ways — they have turned from God’s love to serve false gods and their own false sense of what life is.

But there is more to this than just a question of who is fair — Israel as a collective nation has been addressed often as sinful; in fact, they have been threatened with total national abandonment or exile. And so, Ezekiel addresses the question of the individual’s personal freedom to turn from God’s ways and then turn back again. The father is not guilty for the son’s sin, but only the son. There are consequences to actions. Israel as a nation has often chosen wickedness and death. Yet God is seen as fair by continuing to allow them the free choices to worship and serve God or false idols.

Matthew’s Gospel is one more “stick-it-to-me” parable. These parables are slowly getting Jesus in deep trouble with the religious leaders of his day. The great thing is that Jesus just keeps saying his truth — it’s all part of his mission.

Jesus tells a parable of two sons [Matthew 21:28-32]. The father asks the boys to work in the vineyard. One says “no,” but then changes his mind and ends up doing the right thing. He does go work in the vineyard. The other boy says that he will, but then he doesn’t actually do it. His lip service is not sufficient. He says the right thing, but he doesn’t follow it up with good action.

What Jesus is saying here is that the priests and elders are just saying what they think they should,

**GET RID OF YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS:**

A friend once commented that Jesus came not to call the just, but sinners [see Mark 2:17] — that only sinners can be Christians. Jesus didn’t come to save anyone who presumed she or he was already saved. No doubt that’s why conversion is brought up so frequently in the Christian Scriptures. For Jesus’ followers, there’s always a need and a chance to “repent” — to turn our value systems upside down. We never reach a point in our faith when we can start to coast — content just to be on an even keel. Faith implies that we’re committing ourselves to a constant struggle.

The God whom Jesus of Nazareth preached isn’t a God who just carries snapshots of us in his/her billfold, glancing at them whenever we seek some divine help. “Primitive” people who won’t let tourists take their picture because they believe the process will kill them are correct. Photographs do kill us — they stop our lives at a specific time and place in history. Unless we’re masters of photo retouching, we’ll always be the same person we were the instant the camera snapped us. We can’t grow or change.

Thankfully God doesn’t have photos of us. God actually carries us as living and evolving individuals whom he created. As long as we live, we can always repent; we can see people and things from a perspective that we never before noticed and develop a new way of judging them.

Obviously that belief prompts Matthew’s Jesus to tell the two son’s story which a great reaction when he promises that prostitutes and tax collectors are “entering the kingdom of God” before the “righteous” [Matthew 21:28-32]. No matter what someone once decided to do, say, or be, that person isn’t bound to defend that choice for the rest of his or her life. It’s embarrassing for the good folk to be told that society’s outcasts and sinners are better at repenting than they are.

More than 500 years before Jesus’ birth, Ezekiel proclaims a similar message [Ezekiel 18:20-29]. But the prophet emphasizes that it’s a two-way street. Just as someone can turn from evil and embrace good, so someone can reject good and start down a path of evil. Value systems can always be switched — in either direction.

Paul’s letter to the Church at Philippi seems to fit perfectly into this conversion theme [Philippians 2:1-11]. The Apostle begins by encouraging his readers to change the way that they regard one another — urging them to be “of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing,” eventually reaching a point in which they cease looking out for their own interests and begin to be concerned for the interests of others. But, for me, the interesting part of these verses comes when Paul uses Jesus as an example of such an “emptying” of self. Did this Galilean carpenter actually go through a conversion at some point of his earthly existence?

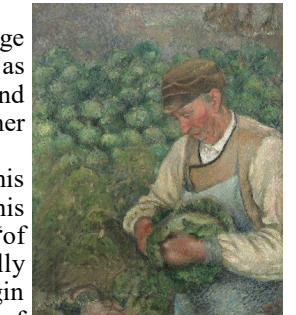
Most of us who buy into John the Evangelist’s theology that the historical Jesus was God from all eternity find this somewhat disturbing. We each have a holy card photo of a divine Jesus. But as we know from Paul’s letter to the Church at Rome, Paul seems to believe Jesus wasn’t aware of his Godliness until God raised him from the dead [see Romans 1]. He was “a man like all of us except in sin.” Jesus also needed to experience a conversion. Some scholars contend that his baptism by John was actually triggered by that change in his value system.

We shouldn’t be discouraged when we find it difficult to change our life’s perspective. It might have taken Jesus of Nazareth about 30 years to change his! Certainly explains the length of his “hidden life” better than any other interpretation that’s been given.

—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].



transgressed the formal law, doing instead what he perceived to be God's will [see Matthew 1:18-25].

St. Paul understood all of this. First of all, he experienced it on the road to Damascus [see Acts 9]. But in writing to his community in Philippi, Paul calls his community to allow Christ's mind to be active in them [Philippians 2:1-11]. Christ's attitude led him to ignore the status that others attributed to God — the sort of prestige that would allow him to do whatever he wanted and awe others. Christ Jesus presented himself as the anti-celebrity — the servant son who revealed that God is not like we might like to think. Jesus revealed a God who waits for people to come around to internalizing the divine will — no matter how long it takes or how much they may resist along the way. It appears that God prefers scandal to lip service.

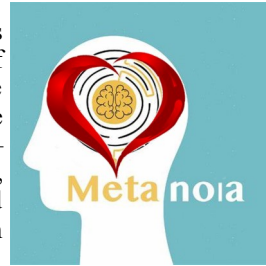
What if the answer to Jesus' question were: "Both children did the father's will — at least in part"? Neither was an ideal child. One made a display of proper respect, but never incarnated that verbal devotion in deed. The other gave the appearance of being sacrilegious, but carried out the father's will. What if we took this parable as an invitation to stop dividing people into camps — contrasting Republicans and Democrats, pro-lifers and the ecology-minded, liberals and conservatives, and on and on? Both children failed the father and both respected him. What about a conclusion that says they were to learn from one another and from the attitude of Christ, who was telling the story?

This solution may not satisfy any of us — some want to cling to respect and others demand action. If we resist the idea of learning from the other, we must be hearing these readings correctly — the Scriptures are supposed to challenge us.

In our selection from Ezekiel, God puts our dissatisfaction on trial. Jesus tells a parable exposing the incompleteness of opposing understandings of God's will. Paul then invites us to take on the mind of Christ who lived and died without defending his own interests in any way.

The Scripture Readings for this 26th Week in Ordinary Time, call us to identify honestly with one of the children and then to really listen to the other. This is the kind of dialogue Pope Francis says will create a Synodal Church. The Gospel is always a call to metanoia — to the change of heart and mind — that opens us up to other perspectives — including God's own!

—taken from the writings of Sister Mary McGlone, C.S.J., which appears 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 23]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-i]----- \$ 1,006.05

Offerings-----[Sunday, September 24]----- \$ 202.00

JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST:

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

but are not following up with good action — they are not doing the right thing. He says that tax collectors and prostitutes will beat them to heaven. The "sinners" are beating the priests to heaven because the "sinners" are changing their ways. They are listening to the word and not just giving lip service but actually following Jesus now and doing the right thing. They may have previously made bad choices, but they are choosing now to turn from the wickedness they have committed and do what is right and just. They are making good choices and backing them up with good action.

The parable is a scriptural image for the nation Israel — and the Elders are very aware of that. Just as in the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke's Gospel [see Luke 15], so in Matthew's Gospel there are also two sons. The first son is asked to go into the vineyard, but says "no." He later changes his mind and goes. The second says "yes sir," but does not go. Jesus then asks his listeners which of the two did the father's will. Of course, their correct answer strengthens Jesus' case against them.

They had seen and heard John invite them into a "new vineyard", and they said "no" to and about him. Now they continue to say "no" to Jesus, but tax collectors and prostitutes who in former times had said "no" have changed, and are living their "yes."

Here is essential Christianity. The tax collectors, prostitutes in their pasts — and we too have, in our lives, said "no" to God's call to "Act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God" [see Malachi 6:8]. Perfection is our origin and orientation, but not our practice.

Recently a man told me that he did not go to church any more because there were nothing but hypocrites in there. I told him there was always room for one more; he didn't like that. I was stepping on his toes a little bit. We are indeed holy hypocrites — we have said one thing and done the opposite. If we are to live gracefully into our futures then we have to live gracefully with our pasts. Hypocrites seem not to be able to admit and live with their histories. By our believing in Jesus' call of mercy we admit our having said "no," but in another sense, we admit Jesus into our present that we might more eagerly go into his "vineyard."

With us it is sometimes "yes" and sometimes "no," but for Jesus it always was, is now, and ever will be, "yes!" Our futures do not redeem our pasts — Jesus is the Redeemer. Our futures will need redeeming as well and Jesus' "yes!" allows us to walk His ways and not fear our stepping on anybody's toes nor tripping over our own perfectionistic feet.

So often we say "no" to God's call, because we hear our fears to trust. With prayer and reflection our actions reverse our natural fearful hesitations and we do "yes." Trust in God's love does not do away with our natural timidity. Even when our actions are a fearful "no" Jesus is the eternal redemptive "yes" which frees us to rise again to go into the Owners vineyard.

Every day we have a choice. We can do the right thing, or not. We need to do what is right and just. We need to make the choice to do good, even if that is not a choice we previously made. We need to make the right choices and follow them up with right action.

—Edited from the writings of Tamora Whitney and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., 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.



WELCOMING JESUS:

Just as the crowds in Jerusalem heralded the arrival of the Messiah, we too must herald the imminent arrival of the Savior on our altar.

—Mike Aquilina

THE VINEYARD AS THE ULTIMATE INVITATION:

The Parable of the Two Sons which is unique to the Gospel of Matthew is probably one of the most easily understandable of all the parables of Jesus [Matthew 21:28-32]. It describes a situation we can all identify with, and one that we surely all have experienced. It is a parable about obedience and disobedience. It is about compliance and rebellion. It is about changing one's mind in a positive way, and changing one's mind in a negative way. It is fundamentally about the choices we make in life.

Yes, we can all identify with the basic story, and we can certainly recognize times in our lives — particularly in our childhood — when we have played the roles of first one brother and then the other. And every parent can see their own children doing the same sorts of things — and it probably irks them greatly. But if the parents are even moderately mature, they don't get too upset because they know that children need from time to time to rebel and exercise their independence and understand that in time the children will learn from their actions and so grow in maturity.

Parents also realize that on other occasions their children will appear to be obedient and compliant, but then neglect to do what they have promised. The parents understand that this is a form of passive-aggression, and that this, too, is something that children will grow out of on their way to full adulthood.

But of course, these kinds of attitudes are certainly not restricted to children or teenagers. We frequently meet people in the workplace who exhibit similar behavior, and often enough we find ourselves on occasion doing the same sorts of things.

From time to time we need to reflect on our outward behavior and gradually put in check such immature attitudes in order to grow into our full stature as mature human beings. But we also have to admit that this is much easier to spot these things in others than it is to see them in ourselves.

Important though these issues are, we realize, of course, that the parable is intended by Jesus to work at an entirely different level. When Jesus asks the Priests and Elders: "Which of the sons did the father's will?" we realize that he is actually talking about how his listeners are behaving in relation to the will of God the Father. Clearly Jesus is implying that they are like the second son in the story who says that he will do his father's will but actually does not. And he contrasts their behavior to that of tax collectors and prostitutes who have repented and received John's baptism.

It seems that Jesus deliberately chooses these two groups of people — tax collectors and prostitutes — to deliberately irk the Chief Priests and Elders. Both groups are guilty of serious sin — the tax collectors because they cheat and extort money from the people, and the prostitutes because they are guilty of sexual licentiousness. We can see how these two types of sin would be particularly abhorrent to the priests and anyone connected to the Temple.

But these two groups also represent something else deeply repellent — namely collaboration with the Romans, the occupying power, the colonizers. The tax collectors are gathering money for the Roman authorities and the prostitutes are providing other kinds of services for their soldiers. Both are therefore collaborators; both are betraying the nation.

This parable of the two sons is actually the second of three consecutive parables about "vineyards" which Matthew presents in his Gospel. Last week we heard the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, and next week we are presented with the Parable of the Tenants of the Vineyard. All three of these parables are clearly addressed to the Jewish authorities and are meant to expose their deep hypocrisy and their ultimate refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah and the message of his Gospel. As we see from the pages of the Gospel this annoys them intensely and arguably provokes them into the actions which led to the death of Jesus.



joy that you made it!"

Thomas Halik, a Czech writer, suggests that one of the reasons why so many people in the world reject the churches is that they see us as "embittered moralizers," older brothers of the prodigal son, doing our religious and moral duties, but bitterly, and criticizing those who don't live like us out of hidden envy. Nietzsche made a similar accusation more than a hundred years ago.

Sadly, there's more than a little truth in that accusation. Too often, we are embittered moralizers, secretly envying the amoral and criticizing our world out of bitterness. But that's an occupational hazard for the good and the faithful. Peter and first apostles struggled with it. Why should we be immune?

We needn't be immune, but we do need to be honest in admitting that, despite our real goodness and fidelity, we are still far from being full saints.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: Zechariah 8:1-8, Matthew 18:1-10

Tuesday: Zechariah 8:20-23, Luke 9:51-56

Wednesday: Nehemiah 2:1-8, Luke 9:57-62

Thursday: Nehemiah 8:1-12, Luke 10:1-12

Friday: Baruch 1:15-22, Luke 10:13-16

Saturday: Baruch 4:5-29, Luke 10:17-24

27th Week in Ordinary Time: Isaiah 5:1-7, Philippians 4:6-9, Matthew 21:33-43

A CALL TO METANOIA:

Listen as God complains about our grievances: "You say I'm not fair! Who's really unfair in this universe? It seems to me that you like to freeze people in place, deciding that people will forever be what they once were. What about allowing for a bit of change?" [Ezekiel 18:20-29].

If we read Ezekiel in the light of the other Scripture Readings for the 26th Week in Ordinary Time, we might discover a different approach. First, a look at Jesus' parable about two children [Matthew 21:28-32]. In this vignette, a father needed help in his vineyard. When he sent his children, one of them committed the unthinkable offense of openly defying the father — an attitude tantamount to denying that he was father to him or her. The second child responded with great formal respect, but did nothing to satisfy the father's need. Obviously, neither child acted rightly — one defied the father; the other replied politely and then rendered the words meaningless. Then Jesus says that the disrespectful child had a "change of mind."

The Greek word "Metanoia" suggests a deep emotion, an adjustment of a person's basic priorities. This change of mind implied a refocusing of values, internalizing the father's desires — a course of action that effectively and affectively reversed the original insolent "not-your-child" response.

The people who replied to Jesus' question had to swallow hard before saying which child did the father's will. How could they say that a child who acted disrespectfully was in the right?

Interestingly, Matthew's infancy narrative subtly anticipates the gist of this parable. In telling of Jesus' origins, Matthew focused on Joseph. As a righteous and merciful man, he intended to divorce Mary, the unwed mother, in quiet — until an angel caused him to change his mind. As a result, he

EMBITTERED MORALIZING:

In a masterful book on grace, Piet Fransen suggests that we can test how well we understand grace by gauging our reaction to the following story: “Imagine a man who during his whole life is entirely careless about God and morality. He’s selfish, ignores the commandments, ignores all things religious, and is basically consumed with pursuing his own pleasure — wine, sex, and song. Then, just hours before his death, he repents of his irresponsibility, makes a sincere confession, receives the sacraments of the church, and dies inside that conversion.”

Simply put, we will be rewarded with heaven and it will be wonderful. Isn’t it wonderful that he received the grace of conversion before he died? Or more likely: the lucky beggar! He got away with it! He got to have all that pleasure and still gets to go to heaven!

If we felt the latter emotion — even for a moment — we have never deeply understood the concept of grace. Rather, like the older brother of the prodigal son, we are still seeing life away from God’s house as fuller than life inside God’s house, are still doing the right things mostly out of bitter duty, and are secretly envying the amoral [see Luke 15]. But, if this is true, we must be gentle with ourselves. It is an occupational hazard for good, faithful persons.

Jesus, himself, expresses this in the parable of the vineyard workers. This parable was addressed to Peter in answer to a question. Peter, on behalf of the other disciples, had just asked Jesus what reward they were going to receive for their fidelity to him [Matthew 19:27].

Jesus tells him the story of very rich and generous landowner who goes out one morning and hires workers to work in his vineyard. He hires some early in the morning, promises them a good wage, keeps hiring others as the day progresses, each new group having to work fewer hours than the group before them, and ends the day by hiring a group of workers just one hour before work is to end.

Then he tells his foreman to pay everyone a full day’s wage. But this leaves the workers who toiled the whole day somewhat bitter. “This isn’t fair!” they protest. “We worked the whole day and bore the heat of the sun and this last group worked just one hour. It’s unfair that we all receive the same wage!” The generous landowner, obviously representing God, is gentle in his response: “Friend, didn’t you agree to this wage? And isn’t a good wage? Are you envious and angry because I’m generous?” [Matthew 20:11-16].

Then if that weren’t enough, Jesus continues to tell the story of one son who changed his mind, and another son who promised to go into the vineyard, but never went [Matthew 21:28-32]. Remember to whom those words are being addressed: Jesus is talking to Peter — and, in effect, through this parable, is addressing all good people who are morally and religiously bearing the heat of the day. And Jesus is assuring us that we will be rewarded richly for doing this. But, as the parable makes clear, there’s a catch: simply put, we will be rewarded with heaven and it will be wonderful; but, and this is the catch, we can have everything and enjoy nothing because we are watching what everyone else is getting!

I sometimes try to highlight this point rather graphically when I give retreats to priests and religious. I have them consider this scenario: imagine you live out your life in fidelity to your vow of celibacy, metaphorically, and otherwise bearing the heat of the day and, when you get to heaven, the first person you meet there is Hugh Hefner—the founder of Playboy. In shock you protest to God: “How did he get in here? It’s not fair, given the life he lived and the life that I was asked to live!” And God, the over-generous landowner, gently replies: “Friend, didn’t you agree to a life of celibacy, and isn’t heaven a wonderful place? Are you envious and angry because I’m generous?” And, how different this reaction is to that of a true saint who, upon meeting someone like this in heaven, would, like the father of the prodigal son, rush over in joy, embrace the person, and say: “I’m overwhelmed with



It might be said that by deliberately challenging the religious authorities, Jesus is bringing forward his death on the Cross. But while this might be partly true, we can never say that he was in some perverse way responsible for his own death. Jesus maintains his integrity throughout his ministry. He remains true to the values of the Kingdom, and he speaks out because he simply cannot remain silent. It could be said that by using parables he was being remarkably restrained, because by means of parables he was telling the truth but in a veiled way.

Through reflecting on the deeper meaning of the parables, the truth gradually dawns on the Chief Priests and the Pharisees; it exposes their own inconsistencies and their use of religion to achieve power and their own self-aggrandizement.

The only trouble with the use of parables by Jesus is that they echo down through the generations with just as much power as when they were first spoken, and they challenge us modern day hearers just as much as they challenged the people of his own day. These parables sit in judgement on us. They are addressed to you and to me right now. And if we are guilty of hypocrisy, they will surely find us out.

Yes, they will find us out, and yet they also provide us with a way out and this is admirably put in the very last line of today’s Gospel: “think better of it and believe in him.” God always gives us the chance to think better of our words and actions and attitudes; he always reaches out to us, and he always invites us to repent of our errors and to believe in him.

God is constantly there for us showing us the true path. Even in our most deeply sinful moments, even in our times of most profound doubt and rejection, God is there holding out his hand to us, inviting us to have faith and trust in him. God wants above all for us to accept his Gospel of love and to begin to live a new and better life; a life of integrity, faith and justice.

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

A SELF-SACRIFICING LIFE:

Paul’s letter to the Church at Philippi contains a marvelous early hymn which celebrates Christ, who “emptied himself taking the form of a slave” and “humbled himself” to the point of death on a cross [Philippians 2:1-11]. Paul used the example of Christ to encourage the Philippians to live a life of self-sacrificing love — “Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory: rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others.” The Apostle, who had a special affection for the church in Philippi — which he founded — asked them to complete his joy by “being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing.”

We can hear in Paul’s words a call to live a life of self-sacrificing love in imitation of Christ for the sake of uniting communities. We are to put on the mind of Christ and make his self-emptying attitude our own. Our calling is to join with other like-minded believers to promote the common good.

Possibilities come to mind. A daughter who virtually ignored her parents during her long-extended adolescence could grow up and begin a long process of attending to their needs. A man who went through a bitter unwanted divorce could help care for his ex-wife who contracted terminal cancer. A woman could continue to assist her disabled neighbor by moving the daily newspaper closer to his door — even though he never says thanks. A man could allow his brother to take some undeserved credit for their joint business success in order to keep peace in the family.

In what specific way could you practice the self-sacrificing love of Christ?

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

JUSTICE:

Human justice says to “give to each his own according to what he deserves”, while God’s justice does not measure love on the scales of our returns, our performance or our failures: God just loves us

—Pope Francis

TAKING OWNERSHIP OF OUR LIVES:

A man came into a psychiatrist's office wearing two strips of bacon — one attached to each ear — and two fried eggs, sunny-side-up, on the top of his head. He sat down and addressed the psychiatrist, "Doctor, I'm here to talk to you today about my sister."

Why is it, that it is so much easier for us to see the flaws and peculiarities of other people and largely remain blind to shortcomings in ourselves? Why is it that we are so quick to point out ways in which other people need to change, but remain largely content about the people that we are — even when our habits hurt those we love?

It's a kind of denial — walking around with eggs on your head and pretending that everything is normal. But it's a denial that is largely unnecessary. The truth is, that when we are able to admit our faults, when we can own the mistakes that we have made, we are not submitting to defeat and failure. We are, instead, taking the first step toward healing and success.

That is the message of Jesus' parable in Matthew's Gospel [Matthew 21:28-32]. An owner of a vineyard had two sons and neither one of them was perfect. The first son said "no" to his father, but then changed his mind and did what his father asked. The second son said "yes" to his father's request but did nothing. A perfect son would have said "yes to his father and then done the father's will. But few of us are perfect. That is why, for us, the hero of today's parable is the first son, who originally said "no" but then changed his mind and went to work in the vineyard. The good news of the parable is that with God's help, we can change a "no" into a "yes."

This movement from "no" to "yes" is a fundamental Christian pattern that is routinely present in the Scriptures. Peter denies Jesus, but later repents. Thomas refuses to accept Jesus' resurrection, but then becomes a believer. Paul persecutes the early followers of Jesus, but then converts and becomes one of the great apostles of the church. In later generations, this same movement continues. Augustine lived his early life in debauchery, but then became one of the great spiritual teachers of our history. Francis of Assisi began his life in privilege and self-indulgence, but then changed to live a life of simplicity and service.

We need not be ashamed of moving from "no" to "yes." Whenever we follow that pattern, we find ourselves in very good company. But if we are going to follow this basic Christian movement, we must start by admitting our denial. We must begin by owning that there are ways in which we say "no," ways in which we are flawed, ways in which we need to change.

So, what are the ways that you say "no" in your life? What are the ways you need to change? The gospel today calls us to own our shortcomings. Do you find yourself judging others, being impatient with those who think or act differently than you do? Are you prejudiced towards those of a different race, religion, nationality or sexual orientation? Do you find yourself so concerned about your own needs and desires that you ignore your responsibility to the people in your life: to your spouse, to your children or parents, to your friends? Do you find yourself abusing your body by excessive eating or the misuse of alcohol, tobacco or drugs? How often do we find ourselves refusing to admit that we are wrong, never saying we're sorry or asking someone else for forgiveness? How often do we get so caught up in the details of life that we turn ungrateful, forgetting to thank the people who serve us and help us day after day?

Whatever flaws you find in your life, whatever mistakes you have made, they need not control you. Our past does not determine our future. Our history is not our destiny. A sin can be forgiven. A flaw can be mended. A life can be changed. Through our Baptism, we are part of a community where sinners become saints on a daily basis, where those who judge learn to understand, where those who think only of themselves become servants of others.

It is never too late. Mercy never runs out. With God's help, our worst "no" can become a clear and glorious "yes."

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

receive here — the strength of Christ, the power of the Gospel — and integrate this into our daily lives. We may have been sinners, but we are trying our best now. You and I need to stop beating ourselves up. We need to remember that the changes that we have put into our lives have given us scoreboard.

The prophet Ezekiel posed this question: "Are God's way's unfair? [Ezekiel 18:20-29]. Is God wrong to condemn a virtuous person who turns to a life of sin, or reward a sinful person who turns to virtue?" The answer is that those who win the race, win. Those who stop running, lose. I often mention to people that it would be easier for us in our lives if we would just run directly from the starting line to the finish line. But we are human beings. We run off course at times. What matters is that we get to the finish line — even if our Guardian Angels have to work overtime to convince us to get there.

What must it have been like for Levi the tax collector — who is now Matthew — or for Mary Magdalene — the former prostitute who was now dear to God — what must it have been like for them and others like them to stand with Jesus? Were they self-conscious? Did they agree with the elders and chief priests that they did not belong in the presence of a holy man? Or did they recognize that this man

A WISDOM IN NATURAL RHYTHM:

Life is not lived on a continuum — not even the spiritual life. We do not find God on a laser beam — bright and cold and straight. We have times of great, dark incubation. We have times that are barren and arid and bleak. We go through periods when life feels more like death than like gestation. But it is always gestating. It may even be in the dark times that we grow the most. "Springtime God, we need your persistent love to disturb our heart's rigidity," Kate Compston wrote.

I love the image of a "springtime God." Isn't God always the growing season in us? Isn't everything that happens in life simply seeding something to come — and isn't all of it God? But if that's true, the question is, then: are all our thoughts new seeds of life to be pursued? Because if so, then I am being called on, and I am, as usual, reluctant to go.

I watch our garden come and grow year after year. I don't know a thing about flowers or bushes or shrubs to this day. But I know when the back part of the garden will go white. And the front part will go bright orange. And the leaves on the rare old beech will turn gold. Each of them touches something different in me. Each of them releases something in me that nothing else does. I am learning to live my life according to the calendar of that garden. "A wisdom still abides in the natural rhythms of the earth, if we are still and open ourselves to it," Kimberly Greene Angle wrote.



There is a wisdom in natural rhythm, but we long ago abandoned it to technology and electricity. Now there is no stopping, no ending — only quitting. I long ago fell prey to it and forgot how to stop and wondered how to quit. So now two unnatural rhythms try for the marrow of my soul — fatigue that is chronic, and frustration that is terminal. I am determined to defeat them both.

We have become human hamsters on a twenty-four-hour wheel. We work and run and talk at all times. The dark never overtakes us. The silence of the day never sets in. And we wonder why we can't find God. We are never still enough anymore to listen to the voice within that will tell us how. We fail to understand that every season of life has a message of its own.

My God is definitely a God of the seasons. I prefer that God in spring and fall — when things emerge and things mellow — but I have learned more from the God who is the heat of my day and the icy obstacles of my life. From that God, I have learned the depths of the self.

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

A PRAYER:

Loving God, look with mercy upon the human race you have created. May our hearts see your kingdom in which the destructive poverty of our world is destroyed and so that we will make poverty history. Amen.

SCOREBOARD:

I want to speak today about scoreboard, collaborators, blue collar sinners, you and me.

First of all, **scoreboard**. I love sports. I have tickets for all the Tampa Bay Bucs games. I am a rabid Yankee fan. I like tennis, and sometimes I'll even watch golf — although I am not sure that golf is a sport. Like all sport fans, I speak with absolute authority on what should have taken place the day after the game. A former parishioner of ours — the late Jim Fregosi — had been an all-star professional baseball player and the manager of the Toronto Blue Jays and Philadelphia Phillies. Jim once told me that part of the fun of sports — and a goal of every good franchise — is for everyone watching to feel that he or she is an expert in the game.

There are certainly a lot of experts in every major league city. We have radio stations with non stop analysis of every move that the coach makes, what he should have done last Sunday, and what he'll never be able to do this Sunday. I guess that's all fun, but none of it matters a bit. All that matters is scoreboard. The term scoreboard refers to the final score of the game. If a team wins — no matter how well or poorly one or more players appear to have played — the winning team has scoreboard. If someone says: "the quarterback threw two interceptions and only completed seven passes", the quarterback can still say: "But I have scoreboard. I won."

There is no argument to that.

And Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: "tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of heaven before you" [Matthew 21:28-32]. They may have made huge mistakes in their lives; they may have been terrible sinners — but they responded to the call of the Lord. You chief priests and elder of the people didn't respond to the Lord. The tax collectors and prostitutes have won the game of eternal life.

They have scoreboard.

Now, about **collaborators and blue collars sinners**. The tax collectors and prostitutes were white collar and blue collar sinners; the tax collectors were collaborators with the pagan Roman occupiers of Israel. They had a nice, clean job, being paid handsomely by the Romans for determining how much each of the people had to pay. Worse than this, they were cheats who usually assessed the people more than they gave the Romans — thus further lining their own pockets. All this, of course, was enforced by the Roman soldiers standing behind them. Levi was a tax collector — he was a white collar sinner. He collaborated with the pagans against his own people and God's people. But when Jesus called Levi, he left his table, changed his life and name. He became Matthew, the saint whose feast we celebrated on September 21st. By the end of his life this once sinful collaborator as well as many of his companions who responded to the Lord had scoreboard over the so called righteous leaders of the people.

The prostitutes who followed Jesus also had scoreboard. They were blue collar sinners. Theirs was not a life of white collar comfort. They had to work hard to make a living by drawing others into sin. They accepted being treated poorly for the sake of the money they were given. But so many of them changed their lives when they were called by the Lord. Even though they had been terrible sinners, they ended up in the Kingdom of Heaven — that's scoreboard.

The first son in Matthew's Gospel parable had scoreboard. Maybe he did not immediately respond to his father's call, but he did go to the vineyard and work there. His brother didn't. He spoke a good game, but the final score was Son number one: 1, Son number two: 0.

All of this is an introduction to something we need to recognize. As long as we are doing our best to respond to Jesus's call, to God's will for us, we have scoreboard. Too many of us are down on ourselves for our past lives. Many of us can truthfully say: "I have made major mistakes. I have been a sinner." But we are here now. We are doing our best to follow the Lord. We try our best to take what we have

**OBEDIENCE BASED ON RELATIONSHIP:**

Graham Greene was a British novelist who has come to be regarded as one of the greatest English-language writers of the last century. Greene — who passed away in 1991 — wrote more than two dozen novels as well as several plays, screenplays, and collections of short stories. Woven throughout his writings are religious themes — especially about the themes of forgiveness and redemption. Anyone who has read the story of the nameless "Whiskey Priest" in *The Power and the Glory*, of the adulterous Sarah in *The End of the Affair*, or of the Cervantes-inspired Monsignor Quixote knows Greene, who was also Roman Catholic, artfully weaves together questions of God and faith with the complexities — and darkness — of life and love.

In one of his non-religious novels, the thriller *Brighton Rock*, Greene again finds an opportunity to reflect on God's mercy and the hope of redemption when he writes: "You can't conceive, my child, nor can I or anyone, the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God." Greene is right. When weighed against human standards, God's mercy is appallingly strange because it costs us so little — God asks only that we surrender to his love and mercy.

This way of surrender is modeled by Jesus himself — obedience.

Although "obedience" is an unpopular word in our contemporary culture, it is one of the non-negotiables of Christian life. Instead of being based on the ideas of authority and submission, real obedience — the kind of obedience Jesus showed to his Father — is based on relationships. In essence, to be obedient to another person is to say to them: "I love you so much that I'm willing to do what you ask or give you what you need without you even having to ask." It's to recognize that we are bound to one another and that we are responsible for caring for each other.

In fact, our word "obedience" comes from the Latin work "oboedire", which can be translated simply as "to listen." Ultimately, to be obedient to someone is to listen to them with — as Saint Benedict says in his *Rule for Monasteries* — "the ear of the heart".

In his Letter to the Church at Philippi, Saint Paul reminds of the obedience of Jesus who, "humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" [Philippians 2:1-11]. Jesus offered his life as an act of obedience to God the Father for our sakes. He recognized what the Father was asking of him — and what would be the best for us — and he surrendered his life on the cross as the greatest act of love that is possible.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus himself speaks of obedience in the parable of the two sons [Matthew 21:28-32]. The fundamental question here is: "Which of the two did his father's will?" In this parable, we are being reminded that if we are really going to call ourselves disciples of Jesus, we have to be willing to set aside our preferences and prejudices and orient our lives to God's will and what is best for those around us. Obedience demands that we make a gift of ourselves for the good of others, just as Jesus did.

In the eighteenth century the French Jesuit priest Jean Pierre de Caussade reflected: "The free gifts he asks of us are self-denial, obedience and love. The rest is his business. It does not matter whether the soul is carefully fulfilling the duties of one's state of life, or quietly following the leadings it is given, or submitting peacefully to the dealings of grace." For most of us, this "free gift" is a process of surrender which unfolds gradually over the course of a life of prayer, service, struggle, and, yes, even setbacks.

The call of Jesus is for us to open our minds and our hearts so that we can freely respond to what is being asked of us as we continue live out our call to discipleship.

—taken from the writings of Brother Silas Henderson, S.D.S., which appear on the internet.

INTERESTING OBSERVATION:

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

BE WHO YOU ARE — SHARING GOD’S HEART:

Something that I always enjoyed at the end of every school year was to receive my yearbook, look through the many pages of pictures, and have my friends sign their names and write notes like “H.A.G.S.,” “what a fun year,” or “I can’t believe we made it again!” One of my memorable notes occurred when I was much younger; a friend thought it would be funny to write: “God made rivers, God made lakes, but when God made you, He made a mistake.” While it had a clever rhyming scheme and clear message, this poem could not be the furthest from the truth!

I know it was just a joke, and I did not believe this lie at that time, but unfortunately, I remember certain times in my life when I felt like I was a mistake. I thought I was a mistake because I did not understand my identity — who I was meant to be. I thought my identity was what I could do with my hands — like in sports, on a stage, or on a test, and because I saw other people doing better than me in these areas, I thought I must not be good enough.

It took me a while to finally understand that who I am is not what I can do. I learned to find my identity in God’s love for me, and understand that He made me with a certain personality, different traits, qualities, and skills to reflect His heart to the World. I can reflect God to the world in a completely unique way that no one else can.

Truthfully, every created person possesses a unique part of God’s heart that He wants the world to see. So trying to be like someone else is denying the world part of God’s heart. This truth has allowed me to better recognize how I can be God’s Heart for the World, and how others can too, as God intended.

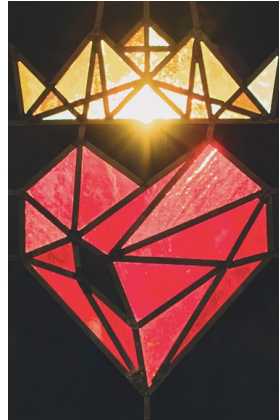
We see this beautiful intentionality of God — His desire to design and create with purpose — in the world around us as well. Every part of this incredible world in which we live is designed to reflect God to humankind. God is reflected to us when we look out to the booming waves of the ocean and see His power, or lie in a field of wildflowers and see — and smell — His beauty. We can look into the vastness of outer space and contemplate His infinitude — God’s pretty big — or study the rain forests and meditate on the richness and complexity of the very Life of God. Because God is so vast, there are many aspects of Himself that can be reflected. This is why we see such a diverse collection of created things in the world — to show off, in a sense, God’s very self. And among the many examples we can list, the best is found in the crown of God’s creation — humans.

It’s actually quite incredible to look at the many differences we can find in one another. God has truly highlighted His creativity and ability through giving every human his or her own unique combination of specific qualities, features, temperaments, and abilities. On top of all of these, God made us each even more unique by adorning every single human person with a unique soul — each person has his or her own sole identity given to us by God.

You are unrepeatable, unreplaceable, never before existing, and nothing like you will ever exist again. Sure, many people might share some of your qualities, or can do similar things as you. However, no one can speak with your voice the thoughts and ideas that you have had, and no one can love with your love. Keeping this in mind we can see that God made each and every one of us unique in our qualities, abilities, and personalities as well as giving each of us, on top of all that, a unique soul that can know, have its own memory and life, and has the amazing ability to love.

In our design to reflect the Creator, we reflect His Love through our love. When we love one another as God loves us — with our own unique personalities that God has given us, we participate in God’s love for the world, by simply being who we were created to be.

In making us in the way He did, God’s hope for us is to discover and develop ourselves so that we can reflect the specific aspect of who He is that He created us to reflect — in this way, we can look at one



another too as different windows with a beautiful view of God’s Amazing heart and His love for us.

Truthfully, every person created possesses a part, a unique reflection of God’s heart that exists in no one else. So trying to be like someone else is denying the world part of God’s heart. Other people have been designed to make other parts of God’s Heart known to the world, and if we are all trying to be like each other and not the way God made us, then the world is missing out on that unique expression of God’s love.

In the 1300’s, St. Catherine of Siena said: “Be who God meant you to be and you will set the World on fire.” If we are who we were made by God to be, then we will make His Heart known to the world and others will come to know more of who He is through us. We do this by seeking Him in prayer, staying close to His grace in the Church, and striving to live a virtuous life.

No one is perfect. We must accept that we have faults, but we each have many positive qualities as well. To be who God made you to be means to accept your good qualities and talents together with your flaws and limitations. That is part of being human. And to accept the person who God made you to be is to trust in His Beautiful plan for your life.

God does not make mistakes; He designed us the way we are for a reason. And so we know for certain that we have His blessing to be ourselves. In a way, we have been given a duty to be ourselves because God truly wants the world to know the aspect of His Heart that He created us to reflect.

It takes courage to carry out this mission because it is pure vulnerability. We might hide our true selves because we are afraid of being rejected or made fun of. However, if we remember that God’s plan is to work in our lives and seek first to please Him, He will give us everything we need to overcome any rejection we might experience. Furthermore, being our true self might even allow those who are meant to be our real friends to find us.

An amazing example of this is none other than the God made Flesh Himself — Jesus. All throughout the Gospels, Jesus is rejected by those He opens Himself up to. However, He never shies away from doing what He knows He is supposed to do or speaking what He is supposed to say. Jesus was who He was meant to be and look at the fire still blazing 2,000 years later that He left behind.

Some might say: “Yeah, well He is God. Of course He can do that”. That is a good point, but are we not meant to imitate our Lord? This is what many saints through the ages have done and they too — St. Catherine of Siena included — have left fires roaring.

If we seek Jesus, trust in His loving plan for us, and remember that we have been perfectly created to glorify God in who we are, we will discover our true selves and share it with the world. If we do this and love like Him, we will find the peace that we have been looking for and a brighter world from our witness. God longs to share His heart with the world through you. Let Him.

—taken from the writings of Thomas Clements, a Christian musician.

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].

THE GIFT OF PRESENCE:

In times of turmoil and danger, gratitude helps to steady and ground us. It brings us into presence, and our full presence is perhaps the best offering we can make to our world.

—Joanna Macy