

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ Prayer from “Laudate Deum” ~

We praise you, O God, Creator of all things,
whose mystery unfolds in “a leaf, in a mountain trail,
in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face.”

Jesus, your Son, taught us to wonder
as he made his way throughout the land,
contemplating the beauty of creation.

We pray, O God,
that you may stir in us a reverent awareness
of our invisible link with the entire created world.

We pray for humility —
to remember that we, too, are created
and are not creation’s masters.

We pray for compassion —
for open eyes and hearts
to welcome those forced to flee from their homes
due to rising sea levels and drought.

We pray for repentance —
so that our thirst for power and domination
may be transformed into service.

We pray for simplicity —
and the will to turn from our greed
which impacts vulnerable people everywhere.

We pray for cultural conversion —
that we may simplify our lifestyles,
reduce pollution and waste,
and exercise prudence in our decision making.

We pray for policy changes —
that as a nation and world we may work together
to reverse the course of climate change.

Our hearts ache as we ponder:
“The world sings of an infinite Love:
how can we fail to care for it?”

We praise you, O God,
confident that you work in our hearts
and through our actions,
so that we may better 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.

BLANKET SUNDAY IS THIS WEEKEND:

The 37th Annual Blanket Sunday in-parish appeal is this weekend, **October 14-15, 2023**.

This year, as in the past few, the collection will be a **cash only** collection. We will gratefully accept your cash donations and the **Diocesan St. Vincent de Paul Society** will do the shopping for you, making your money go even further, with bulk purchases of blankets and other items needed by low income families. So give someone a blanket for the winter — and give yourself a warm feeling! **Use the special Blanket Sunday Envelope [on the table] or mark your envelope Blanket Sunday Collection** and we will take it from there. The need is great and donations can also be made securely online at: <https://svdpcle.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!

**FAITH EDUCATION — SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22nd and 29th:**

Our Faith Education classes have begun. Our Faith Education classes meet on **Sundays from 8:45—9:45 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]. **Upcoming class dates: October 22-29 and November 5-12-19**. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.

**WOMEN'S EVENING 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. Light refreshments will be served. **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]**.

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

Wednesday, November 7th 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. Light refreshments will be served. **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:**

Experiencing the unconditional love of God is what prayer is all about.

—Ronald Rolheiser

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- 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 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 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 Becky Woodfin, who is seriously ill.
- For Stephanie Batt Mitchell [’04] and Stephanie’s son, Crawford, who are both undergoing surgery.

FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Father David Burrell, C.S.C.
- For Kathleen Bruechner, mother of Father Michael Thomas, C.S.C.
- For Father Gerry Papen, C.S.C.
- For Brother James Blee, S.S.S.
- For Patty Gorman.
- For Arthur Althans, grandfather of Alison [’11], Olivia [’12], Jake [’14], Alex [’15], and Claudia [’17] Althans
- For Barbara Guerra
- For Shirley Smith, sister-in-law of Brother Charles Smith
- For Leo Vovk, brother of Marco Vovk [’79]

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For an end to the war between Israel and Palestine.
- For the victims of the earthquake in Afghanistan
- 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.

**A WAY OF LIFE:**

Blessed are those who can give without remembering and take without forgetting.

—Elizabeth Bibesco

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 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 Ryllyn [‘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 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 25th:

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: We are the Body of Christ

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 15: 28 th Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, October 16:	NO MASS
Tuesday, October 17: St. Ignatius of Antioch	NO MASS
Wednesday, October 18: St. Luke	NO MASS
Thursday, October 19: Sts Isaac Jogues & John de Brébeuf	NO MASS
Friday, October 30:	NO MASS
Saturday, October 21: 28 th Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, October 22: 28 th Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — OCTOBER 21st:

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. 3

REFLECTION FOR THE WEEK:

There is an old saying about fatigue making cowards of us all. There is truth in those words. Becoming tired has various effects on our spirits as well as our bodies. Physically, fatigue can make us drop things; it can lessen awareness of our senses, and it often tends to isolate us socially. Spiritual fatigue, on the other hand, is something most of us have not thought of before. Maybe it is heretical to imagine even thinking or saying that we can grow tired of God, prayer, the sacraments, and the whole idea of religion. Well there it is — I said it, and I know it is true. Tired can be the same as being bored. It does not surprise me that people will say that they are tired of hearing about the war, the hurricanes, the wild fires, the many murders and deaths, the election, and other such things. We so long for the new and different — something to excite our minds. We often say to others: “What’s new?” Usually we get back a somewhat tired: “O, not much.”

The Eucharist can be like that. It is the same old Eucharist, and each week we wander toward the next old renewal of the New Covenant. There is nothing boring — only bored persons. This week we tired — yet tirelessly seek the very new in the very same and old. What is new in the Eucharist is our living the lives God gave us and which Jesus re-gives to us each time we gather.

At some Churches, the bells are sometimes rung during parts of the mass. These are not meant to wake up the community — the reception of the Eucharist is itself a “wake-up call”. What the bells remind us of is the call to live out the liturgy. What’s new? I am and you are! And if we are not too tired, we will realize that.

The prophet Isaiah presents for us a poetic, hopeful invitation in a spirit of hope within which there is a hint of a new kind of mountain with a new presentation of God’s goodness [Isaiah 25:6-10]. “On this mountain” God will be doing something mighty and surprising. All people are invited to this banquet. The veil of death will be removed, and all will see the goodness of the redeeming God.



“On this mountain” the hand of the saving God will rest with all reproaches wiped away. God will be seen — the God for whom all look for comfort. The banquet and the mountain are images of the person, the messiah, who will welcome, feed and guard all peoples.

Going up to the Temple — to the mountain upon which Jerusalem was planted — was the ultimate experience of the closeness of God. The temple and the city were pictured in the Jewish scriptures as Mother, Fountain, Garden, and a fortress providing security. Isaiah is speaking to the spiritual hunger within the human heart. And this spiritual longing is not met by a God who is passive to our common condition of longing. There is a strong sense of invitation to come to the Mountain in order to be presented with a food for the whole of human emptiness.

The “veil” of not-knowing-God will be lifted from all the people because of the abundance of God’s activity. True security will accompany those who receive joyfully of the goodness of God.

In Matthew’s Gospel [22:1-14], Jesus again directs a stinging parable to the religious leaders. The image in the parable is a king who has prepared a huge banquet celebrating his son. Servants — the prophets within the history of God’s relationship with Israel — are sent by the king to make invitations. These servants are met with some disinterest by those who continue their personal lives. Others mistreat and kill the king’s servants. Prophets in Israel did not have an easy time of it.

The king — in anger — destroys those who had refused the invitations, and instead, sends his servants out into the common areas, streets and alleys to invite the “bad and the good alike.” There seemed to be plenty of them around because the hall was full.

But then comes the unexpected “ear-catching” ending — the king finds one person attending the banquet who is not dressed properly. The king has this person bound and thrown out into the darkness

MEALS IN SCRIPTURE:

Meals obviously play a big role in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. They appear in all three of the Scripture Readings for this 28th Week in Ordinary Time. But our sacred authors look at them from three different perspectives.

Isaiah’s image is often proclaimed at funerals [Isaiah 25:6-10]. Isaiah isn’t talking about heaven. The concept of an eternal reward awaiting us after our physical death wouldn’t enter mainstream Jewish thought until about 600 years after his prophetic ministry. Isaiah is simply looking forward to an ideal age when there would be no death — when that “veil” which entraps all people will finally be destroyed. When that day arrives, everyone will gather on Mt. Zion — the mount on which Jerusalem’s temple is built — for the most terrific banquet anyone could ever imagine. Yet I presume Isaiah knew such a day would never arrive during his lifetime. It was just his “when-my-ship-comes-in” dream — an expression of his faith in God’s eventual care, no matter when and how it would appear.

Still, meals — and especially banquet type meals — were significant events in the biblical world. That seems to be why the gospel Jesus uses the metaphor of a big feast when he’s trying to explain his insight into the “kingdom of heaven.”

Before this story appeared in Matthew and Luke’s gospels, scholars believe it was originally included in a now-lost collection of Jesus’ sayings which they refer to as the “Q.” Both evangelists changed it around a little to fit their unique theologies. Luke, for instance, who seems to have had problems with “Mrs. Luke,” leaves out the meal’s wedding aspect, and also adds another excuse for not attending [see Luke 14]: “I’ve just married a wife, and therefore . . .” But in either case, gospel readers are reminded that lots of people miss the boat when it comes to recognizing God working effectively in their lives.



By the way, don’t worry about the poor guy who was just walking down the main street, suddenly pulled into a wedding banquet, and then thrown out into the “darkness outside” because he’s not wearing the proper clothes. Matthew has obviously meshed two separate stories into one, simply because they had something to do with wedding celebrations. The second story has nothing to do with the first.

Ignoring the second story, Jesus’ message is clear: “Many are invited, but few are chosen.” Matthew’s readers can prove the point by just looking around. Few people are willing to die enough to themselves to actually experience God in their everyday lives. Though they’re probably longing for such a heavenly encounter, they easily can find excuses for not following through on such a demanding invitation.

On the other hand, Paul of Tarsus is one of the few who has actually accepted the invitation. He’s stepped into a life he could only have dreamt about before he came face to face with the risen Jesus on the Damascus road. By forming the giving relationship with others which that invitation requires, he discovers his value system has drastically been transformed — even about such basics as food. As he tells his Philippian Church: “I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need” [Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20]. He has a new focus in life — a focus which actually brings life, no matter the circumstances he experiences.

It’s more than interesting what people are able to do when they start to experience the risen Jesus among them — especially in the needy people among them. “I can do all things in him who strengthens me,” Paul proclaims. But he would have accomplished nothing had he found an excuse to ignore God’s invitation.

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

CIVILIZATION:

Kindness and compassion toward all living things is the mark of a civilized society.

INVITATION TO THE GOOD LIFE:

What's the difference between an invitation and a call? We might be invited to the game on Sunday, to a party, or even to be godparent to the child of a friend. When does an invitation — “Will you marry me?” — become a call? How do we know our “calling in life?” These are some of the questions that spring from Jesus' story of the king who got stood up when he threw a wedding party for his son.

First of all, the setting. Matthew makes the king the protagonist in this story. Think about this: While you might wiggle out of a neighbor's invitation to a baby shower or potluck, in Jesus' day, an invitation from the king required acceptance — to do otherwise implied insurrection.

So, here we have this king all ready to show off his wealth and generosity by throwing an impressive feast for his son — probably the crown prince. This is no small affair. When the menu includes calves and fattened cattle, we're talking about 750-pound calves and cattle that weigh about twice that much — not counting vegetables and wine! It's hard to calculate the insult resulting from making such preparations only to have the people you want to impress decide that they've got something better to do. You can bet that they weren't thinking that the king was going to rule for long — nor that his heir would become a person of great power. Brushing him off showed that they were counting on a change of regime.

The king was not to be deterred. If the “right people” weren't going to be with him, he would find others and make them right. That's a description of salvation and a retake on Isaiah 25's mountaintop banquet for “all peoples.” These stories portray God's future as a blowout feast for everyone humble enough to accept the fact that they can never deserve the invitation and who, at the same time, know that the invitation itself makes them worthy.



What if we thought about the images of these feasts as call stories?

Most of the vocation stories we hear stress the leaving everything to follow. The fishers left their nets and boats, the women who followed Jesus left their reputations and gave from their own wealth to follow. Jesus himself warned that each would need to take up their own cross.

Nevertheless, the Gospels never present the reign of God as an experience of fast and abstinence. Jesus himself admitted that others called him a glutton and a drunkard [see Matthew 11:19]. Jesus was never accused of being too strict or ascetic!

What if we thought of our calling — our vocation — as an invitation to “the good life” in the sense of a life of fulfillment, joy, celebration, commitment, laughter and love? Isn't that what the folks who filled the king's banquet hall found?

We might think of this party as a mirror of the sacraments of initiation — Baptism, confirmation and Eucharist — symbolized by the acceptance of the invitation, the wedding gown and participating in the feast. Here, “the bad and good alike” can enjoy everything the king has prepared for them. You can imagine them dancing and singing, going back for seconds — or thirds — and popping petit fours into their mouths each time they glide past the dessert table.

This is our invitation, our vocation. All it costs, as in Isaiah 55, is the willingness to participate fully: to accept the invitation, put on the attitudes symbolized by the wedding dress, and then fully enjoy what is offered.

Let's go for it!

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

16 heart” [Jeremiah 24:7].



outside where anger will be experienced. Why such selective brutality?

The “wedding garment” is the issue. I once — while in high school — attended a dance at a Catholic girl's school. I was not allowed in because I wasn't wearing a suit coat. I had a white shirt, tie and expensive sweater on, but that wasn't enough. What is the “garment” in Matthew's writing? Experts in scripture write that it is Baptism — proper incorporation into the “hall” or community. Others write that the “garment” is how the invitation has changed the called-person. Perhaps the invitee just sat there eating and drinking, but not relating selflessly with the others. Perhaps he/she was even taking food and drink from others. They might not have been acting as invited, but entitled. Perhaps they had forgotten that there was more than food and drink provided — there was a relationship extended.

It is easy to be emotionally hijacked by a story like the one Jesus tells in the Gospel today because it contradicts the image of God and the image of the kingdom of heaven we have. The story is symbolic, but the invitation is real. The Gospel reminds us that God's invitation to attend to our faith and relationships is broad, persistent, and generous. There is also a reminder that when we refuse to attend to our faith and relationships, there are consequences and serious implications for us and those around us. What we do as people of faith matters; our response to God matters. God is merciful and, therefore, never stops inviting us to the banquet of life where we may eat that which is nourishing and rest in the safety of God's arms.

The “elders and priests” knew that Jesus was telling them that He was the same invitation to change — because of the relationship to which they had always been invited, and they didn't want in. Jesus was telling them that they were getting tossed out — not because they were not baptized, but that they refused to let Him into their dance because He was dressed differently than they expected or demanded.

—Edited from the writings of Vivian Amu and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

A QUALITY OF ALIVENESS:

Hope's home is at the innermost point in us — and in all things. It is a quality of aliveness. It does not come at the end, as the feeling that results from a happy outcome. Rather, it lies at the beginning, as a pulse of truth that sends us forth. When our innermost being is attuned to this pulse, it will send us forth in hope, regardless of the physical circumstances of our lives. Hope fills us with the strength to stay present, to abide in the flow of the Mercy no matter what outer storms assail us. It is entered always and only through surrender — that is, through the willingness to let go of everything we are presently clinging to. And yet when we enter it, it enters us and fills us with its own life—a quiet strength beyond anything we have ever known.

And since that strength is, in fact, a piece of God's purposiveness coursing like sap through our own being, it will lead us in the right way. It sweeps us along in the greater flow of divine life as God moves toward the fulfillment of divine purpose which is the deeper, more intense, more subtle, more intimate revelation of the heart of God.

Through contemplative practice and surrender, we can experience God's mystical hope and become a healing presence to the world. Here is what Cynthia Bourgeault writes: “In the contemplative journey, as we swim down into those deeper waters toward the wellsprings of hope, we begin to experience and trust what it means to lay down self, to let go of ordinary awareness and surrender ourselves to the mercy of God. And as hope, the hidden spring of mercy deep within us, is released in that touch and flows out from the center, filling us with the fullness of God's own purpose living itself into action, then we discover within ourselves the mysterious plentitude to live into action what our ordinary hearts and minds could not possibly sustain. In plumbing deeply the hidden rootedness of the whole, where all things are held together in the Mercy, we are released from the grip of personal fear and set free to minister with skillful means and true compassion to a world desperately in need of reconnection.

“Hope is not imaginary or illusory. It is that sonar by which the body of Christ holds together and finds its way. If we, as living members of the body of Christ, can surrender our hearts and listen for that sonar with all we are worth, it will again guide us — both individually and corporately — to the future for which we are intended. And the body of Christ will live, and thrive, and hold us tenderly in belonging.”

—taken from the writings of Father Richard Rohr, O.F.M., which appear on the internet

DO WE RECOGNIZE THE TREASURE?

Jesus' parable of the wedding banquet is a harsh one [Matthew 22:1-14]. I think that this is quite intentional. Jesus' ministry is coming to its conclusion, he has already made his solemn entrance into the Holy City, and he sees his time of teaching coming to a close. Over the past several weekends, we have heard Jesus talking about choices that we have to make.

Now we come to the parable of the Wedding Feast. Jesus is making one final plea to win over our hearts. He wants us to make the decision whether to accept him or not. And to do this, Jesus places before us an increasingly stark set of choices. It also becomes more and more obvious as to who each of the various characters in the parables represent.

In the parable of the Wedding feast, the wedding banquet clearly represents the early Church, and the guests are obviously the Chosen People who unfortunately decide not to come to the banquet. A second invitation is issued, but they still do not come; instead some of them even kill the servants who come bearing the invitation. The servants to represent the prophets. The King in his fury destroys those invited and their town. Matthew here is probably referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, and the subsequent dispersal of the Jewish people among the nations. Then the King issues his invitation to anyone and everyone. This is clearly God extending the invitation to the Gentile community, and that all people are invited to share in salvation.

A little more perplexing is the reference at the end of the parable to the person without a wedding garment. When questioned by the King, the person remains silent and so the King has him bound and then thrown out of the feast.

There are several theories to explain this. Some writers point out that when a great man — such as a King — invites you to a wedding banquet, he would provide at the door the correct garment for the poorer guests to wear. This man had obviously been given such a garment but must have taken it off and laid it aside at some point. Others do not agree with this idea, but say that anyone going to a wedding feast would wear their very best clothes. Thus wearing a set of what were presumably ordinary clothes is insulting to the King. Either way the point is the same — the wedding banquet is a symbol of the Church, and we realize that when we assume membership of the Church we leave off our old clothes which represent sin and put on the new garment of sinlessness. This guest has either never accepted the Gospel or returned to his sinful ways. Whichever it is, this person does not deserve to remain at the banquet.



Thus, while this parable is addressed to the Chief Priests and elders and demands that they must make a choice as to whether to embrace Christ or not, it also has a message to present day Christians warning us not to revert to our old sinful ways. What then we must understand is that while all are welcome into God's Kingdom, just showing up is not sufficient. No, actual, real change is also required in our lives. When we accept the invitation to become part of God's family, we are expected to leave off old sinful ways and to live a new kind of life according to the laws of God.

Of course, this is not easy, and while we might be full of good intentions and earnestly desire to follow Christ's Gospel of love, we may on occasion lapse and fall back into sinful ways.

This does not mean that we are complete failures — as long as we pick ourselves up again and repent of our sins and once again attempt to follow the Christian way of life. It has been said often enough that the Church is not a club for saints, but a hospital for sinners. None of us are perfect — we are all sinners. But we are sinners who repent again and again. We are sinners who really do want to follow Christ's way of perfection.

Because we recognize our own failures, we should be even more patient with others, and realize that

naïve purity of a child, but I would give everything to find true childlike innocence inside the complexity of my adult life. I think that what he means is this: Jesus went into the singles' bars of his time — except he didn't sin. The task in spirituality is not to try to emulate the naive innocence and non-complexity of our childhood. That's an exercise in denial and a formula for rationalization.

The task is rather to move towards a second-naïveté — a post-sophistication which has already taken into account the full complexity of our lives. Only then will we have again the innocent joy of children — even as we are able to stand steady inside the rawness of rock music, the power and complexity of human sexuality, the concupiscent tendencies of the human heart, and the uncanny and wily maneuverings innate inside the human spirit. From there we can write the Magnificat.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: Romans 1:1-7, Luke 11:29-32

Tuesday: Romans 1:16-25, Luke 11:37-41

Wednesday: 2 Timothy 4:10-17, Luke 10:1-9

Thursday: Romans 3:21-30, Luke 11:47-54

Friday: Romans 4:1-8, Luke 12:1-7

Saturday: Romans 4:13-18, Luke 12:8-12

29th Week in Ordinary Time: Isaiah 45:1-6, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5, Matthew 22:15-21

A GOOD QUESTION:

The internet is a manifestation of cultural tendencies that have been snowballing since the Renaissance. I don't think we can understand politics, I don't think we can understand the economy, I don't think we can understand the culture wars without seeing them as downstream of a seismic shift in self-understanding that has a religious character, or at least it has a set of metaphysical, ethical, spiritual assumptions about who we are, who the world is and how we're meant to interact with it. How did we become a world of self-makers?

—Tara Burton

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, October 7]-----[Mass, Online, Mail-i]----- \$ 301.05

Offerings-----[Sunday, October 8]----- \$ 341.00

INNOCENCE, COMPLEXITY, AND SANCTITY:

Some years ago, I officiated at a wedding. As the officiating priest, I was invited to the reception and dance that followed upon the church service. Not knowing the family well, and having church services the next morning, I left right after the banquet and the toasts, shortly after the dancing had begun. When I was seemingly out of earshot, I heard the bride's father say to someone: "I'm glad that Father has gone; now we can celebrate with music and dance!"

I didn't take the remark personally since the father meant well, but the remark stung nevertheless because it betrayed an attitude that painted me — and others like me — as religious but naïve — as good to sit at the head table and be specially introduced, but as being best out of sight when real life begins; as if being religious means that you are unable to handle the earthiness and beat of rock music, as if church and earthy celebration are in opposition to each other, as if sanctity demands an elemental innocence the precludes human complexity, and as if full-blood and religion are best kept separate.

I would give everything to find true childlike innocence inside the complexity of my adult life. But that's an attitude within most people — however unexpressed. The idea is that God and human complexity do not go together. Ironically that attitude is particularly prevalent among the over-pious and those most negative towards religion. For both the over-pious and the militant-impious, God and robust life cannot go together. And that's also basically true for the rest of us — as is evident in our inability to attribute complexity, earthiness, and temptation to Jesus, to the Virgin Mary, to the saints, and to other publicly-recognized religious figures such as Mother Theresa. It seems that we can only picture holiness as linked to a certain naiveté. For us, holiness needs to be sheltered and protected like a young child. As a result, we then project such an over-idealization of innocence and simplicity onto Jesus, Mary, and our religious exemplars that it becomes impossible for us to ever really identify with them. We can give them admiration, but very little else.

For example, the Virgin Mary of our piety could not have written the Magnificat [see Luke 1:46-56]. She lacks the complexity to write such a prayer because we have projected on to her such an innocence, delicacy, and childlikeness so as to leave her less than fully adult and fully intelligent. Ultimately this has a negative effect religiously. To identify an unrealistic innocence and simplicity with holiness sets out an unattainable ideal that has too many people believe that their own red blood — with its restless stirrings — makes them bad candidates for the church and sanctity.

In the Roman Catholic Rite of Baptism, at a point, the priest or deacon pronounces these words: "See in this white garment the outward sign of your Christian dignity. With your family and friends to help you by word and example, bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of heaven." That's a wonderful statement celebrating the beauty and virtue of innocence. But it celebrates an innocence that has yet to meet adult life.

The innocence of a child is stunning in its beauty, and holds up for us a mirror within which to see our moral and psychological scars and the missteps we have taken as adults — not unlike the humbling we can feel when we look at bodies in a mirror when we get older. The beauty of youth is gone. But the disquiet and judgment we feel in the presence of a child's innocence is more a neurosis and misconception than a genuine judgment on our sanctity and moral goodness. Children are innocent because they have not yet had to deal with life, its infinite complexities, and its inevitable wounds. Young children are so beautifully innocent because they are still naïve and pre-sophisticated. To move to adulthood, they will have to pass through inevitable initiations which will leave more than a few smudges on the childlike purity of their baptismal robes.

A friend of mine is fond of saying this about innocence: As an adult, I wouldn't give a penny for the



everyone finds the Christian life difficult. The important thing, though, is to sustain ourselves with regular prayer and worship. It is maintaining our commitment to Sunday mass and to daily prayer that will help us to repent when we fail to keep God's laws.

The worse thing to do is to give up. Just because we commit one sin, we should not think that we are failures and completely written off in God's eyes. The fact is that God calls sinners first to his banquet of love. What we should realize when we sin is that God still loves us deeply — perhaps even more deeply. And maybe coming to this recognition will give us the courage we need to repent and to turn once again to him.

All these things give us cause for rejoicing. This is Good News for the whole world — news that we certainly shouldn't keep to ourselves; we need to share it with others.

Christ told this parable in the days just before his death on the Cross. There is a sense of urgency in his words. He wants his listeners to choose life; he wants his listeners to recognize him for who he is, and he wants them to repent of sin and to commit their lives to following God's laws.

These words of his echo down through the centuries to us now. Although much time has passed, Christ's words are as urgent as ever. He wants us to be ever more conformed to the way of life he proposes in the Gospels. And he tells us that by embracing his teaching we will be enabled to enter God's Kingdom of Love and experience everlasting joy.

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

LIVING IN TRUST:

Around the year 50 A.D., the apostle Paul, traveling with his fellow missionaries, Siles and Timothy, crossed the sea from present day Turkey to Greece, going on to the historic Roman city of Philippi, where in 42 BC, Mark Antony and Octavian had defeated Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar and later settled the veterans of their victorious armies. Despite imprisonment and torture, Paul courageously preached the Gospel of Christ to the Philippians, converting many — including a business woman by the name of Lydia who allowed him to stay in her house. Paul maintained very warm relationships with the Philippians community — the first Christian Church established in Europe.

Years later, while in prison — perhaps in Ephesus around 56 A.D. — Paul wrote a letter to his beloved Philippians. In the letter, Paul thanks his friends for their "kindness" in his "distress" — perhaps some assistance during his imprisonment. He places his expression of gratitude in the larger context of his absolute trust in God, who called him to preach the Gospel and supported his efforts in all circumstances — good and bad. His trusting faith enabled him to maintain an inner equilibrium when his ministry brought him humiliation as well as adulation. As Paul put it, he learned the "secret of being well fed and of going hungry" [Philippians 4:12-14, 9-20]. That secret, which he shared with his Philippian friends — and with us — is that God will supply whatever we need to carry out our God-given tasks and responsibilities. Life can feel like a roller coaster bounding between highs and lows, between surpassing joys and profound sorrows, between simple pleasures and major disappointments. In the midst of such ups and downs, Paul wants us to maintain a spiritual balance, a calm acceptance of reality, and an emotional strength rooted in a fundamental trust in the God who loves, supports, forgives and guides us in all circumstances.

We can imagine individuals drawing inspiration and guidance from the Apostle Paul. A secretary working for a mercurial boss could refuse to allow his dark moods to affect her own natural sunny disposition. A husband shaken by a wife's sudden decision to abandon him and their children could learn over time to forgive her while dedicating himself to helping the children manage the stress of the divorce. A woman who successfully managed the trauma of surgery, chemo and radiation for breast cancer and gratefully enjoyed two years of good health could once again, with God's grace, courageously accept and fight a second diagnosis of cancer. A man deeply distressed by the polarized politics in our country could rise above his disappointment and become active in local politics. A big sports fan who gets overly distraught when his favorite teams lose could get a more balanced perspective on sports and find greater satisfaction in being a good husband and father. How can you learn and practice the secret of trusting God so that you can live with less anxiety and more acceptance?

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

WORTHINESS FOR THE WEDDING BANQUET:

A woman decided that she was going to have a dinner party for a good number of her friends. So, she spent most of the week cleaning, baking, cooking, and preparing the table. And when everyone finally arrived and sat down to eat, she turned to her six-year-old daughter and said: “Honey, why don’t you say the blessing?” “Mommy,” she said, “I don’t know what to say.” “Just simply say what you hear Mommy say.” So, the little girl bowed her head and said: “Dear Lord, why on earth did I invite all of these people to dinner?”

Like the woman in the story, you and I can occasionally have regrets about the invitations that we offer. But that is not the case with our God. For our God is a God of invitation — a God who is constantly inviting all people into relationship, inviting all to share in divine life and love.

Matthew’s Jesus portrays this God of invitation [Matthew 22:1-14]. It also tells us something important about ourselves and our own worthiness to accept God’s call. The king in the parable is constantly inviting people to come to the wedding banquet of his son. But, no one wants to come. Finally, in frustration he says: “Look, the dinner is ready., but those who were invited were unworthy.” What does it mean in the world of this parable to be “unworthy”? It is simple. Unworthiness consists in refusing the invitation.

Underlying this parable is a fundamental, theological belief that the invitation of God is supreme. It is really the only thing that matters. Our worthiness, our successes and our failures do not count as much as God’s call. Therefore, worthiness does not result from all the good things that we have done, but simply from our willingness to say “yes” to the invitation. Unworthiness is not determined by the mistakes and sins that we have committed, but simply our stubbornness in refusing to come to the wedding banquet.

The parable is very clear on this. Look who ends up at the wedding banquet: everyone that the slaves can bring in off the streets — the good and the bad alike. The point here is that our moral condition is secondary to God’s invitation. The banquet is ready and God wants us to come.

Now, this insight can clarify a number of misperceptions that we can have about the Christian faith. At times we may think that faith is about us being good. But it is really about God being good. At times we may think that faith is about us making the choice to love God. But faith is really about God making the choice to love us. All the good things that we do, all the wonderful qualities that we have do not make us worthy of that love. All the mistakes we have made, all the sins that we have committed, do not disqualify us from the invitation that God is offering.

God invites us, and worthiness depends upon whether we say “yes” or “no” to that invitation. To say this in another way, **God does not love us because we are good; we are good because God loves us.** We are good because we have said “yes” to God’s invitation and despite any of our successes or shortcomings, we have chosen to come to the feast.

Clearly, once we have said “yes” and accepted the invitation, we try to live a moral life. We try to do good and avoid evil. But, all of us know that our success in that area is rather uneven. Yet, our success or failure is secondary to God’s invitation. It is God’s call that counts.

So, never think that God loves you because you are good, because you come to church, because you give to charity, because you are a good parent or spouse or friend. All of these things are commendable. But, God’s love for you is prior to, and greater than, any of your achievements. None of the good things you do have any claim on God’s love. Because, before all of them God freely chose to create you, to save you in Jesus Christ, and to call you to eternal life.

Never believe that God has stopped loving you because you have sinned, because you have failed, because you have cheated or lied, because you have hurt other people, because you are prejudiced or



college student, single adult. And you are not alone. God is with you.

Listen to what St. Paul says in his letter to the Church at Philippi. They are some of the most reassuring words in scripture [Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20] — “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.”

Alone, I am not that good — neither are you. But we are not alone — we have Jesus Christ. He gives us the Power of His Spirit to conquer what might seem insurmountable. The Power of the Cross is given to us to wage war on any evil that attacks us.

I can do it. You can do it. We can do all things in Him who strengthens us.

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

SUFI STORIES:

The Sufi tell stories that say all I think I’ll ever know about finding God. The first story is a disarming and compelling one. It is also, I think, a troublesome one, a fascinating one, a chastening one: “Help us to find God,” the seeker begged the Elder. “No one can help you there,” the Elder answered. “But why not?” the seeker insisted. “For the same reason that no one can help a fish to find the ocean.” The answer is clear — there is no one who can help us find what we already have.

The second story is even more challenging. “Once upon a time,” the Sufi say, “a seeker ran through the streets shouting over and over again: ‘We must put God into our lives. We must put God into our lives.’” “Ah, poor soul,” an Elder smiled faintly: “If only we realized the truth: God is always in our lives. The spiritual task is simply to recognize that.”

As a Benedictine, a disciple of an order historically devoted to the Sacrament of the Ordinary, I know how disappointing and how exhilarating that kind of advice can be. The neophyte seeks to pass the test of spiritual heroics; the wise seek to accomplish only the testimony of integrity. The young think the task is to buy God by their good efforts; the insightful know that the task is to want God beyond the lure of lesser ends — including even the trappings of spirituality.

For my own part, I entered religious life intent on being spiritually intrepid. I wanted something far more romantic than the Sacrament of the Ordinary. I expected to find formulas tried and true, ideas that were esoteric, a life that was mystical, a regimen that was at least duly demanding, if not momentarily ascetic. What I found were spiritual manuals that were convoluted and academic, at best, and a community that was simple and centered in God always. The writers had missed the mark; the women were living the life. It was very disappointing. And it was very right.

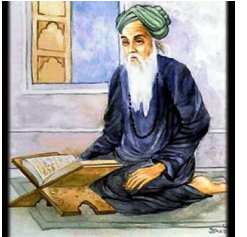
God is not in the whirlwind, not in blustering and show, Scripture teaches us. God is in the breeze — in the very atmosphere around us, in the little things that shape our lives. God is in the contradictions that assail us, in the circumstances that challenge us, in the attitudes that impel us, in the motives that drive us, in the life goals that demonstrate our real aspirations, in the burdens that wear us down, in the actions that give witness to the values in our hearts. God is in the stuff of life, not in the airy-fairy of fertile imaginations bent on the pursuit of the preternatural. God is where we are — including in the very weaknesses that vie for our souls.

God is not a mystery to be sought in strange places and arcane ways. God is a mystery to be discovered within us and around us. And savored.

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

R.C.I.A [Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults]:

Our RCIA program will begin shortly. If you have been thinking about investigating the Catholic faith, or if you know someone who has been thinking about it; if you have been away from the Catholic Church for a while, or are interested in learning more about the Catholic faith; if you know someone who is not fully initiated [Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation] in their Catholic faith — then consider joining or having them join our RCIA program. **Please contact Father John [440-473-3560] for more information.**



IN HIM WHO STRENGTHENS US:

The young man and young woman brought their treasure home — their first, a girl. A few days later, her Mom and sister went home. And there she was — alone with her baby. She never thought she would be so busy. And so tired. But she loved it. After all, this was her baby. Two weeks went by. Between the feeding, changing, holding, napping and crying — the baby's mostly — she has this horrible feeling. She can't tell her husband. She won't tell her mother. But the feeling is more than a thought — it is a reality. She whispers it to herself: "I can't do this."

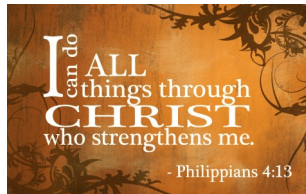
Her husband has gone back to work. All seems to be going well for him. He loves holding the baby, playing with her, and is really quite good at caring for her — including changing diapers. What he doesn't tell his wife is that he can't stand the reality that he isn't a kid anymore. The baby has brought a new demand into his life. He has to be mature. All those things that he spent so much energy on in college are remote history. Then he wonders if he will be able to provide all his family needs. He wonders if he will be able to pay the bills next month. For the first time in his life, he faces pressure that will not go away after exams are taken. In the middle of the bouncing and holding, a doubt has formed. The doubt becomes a statement that he will not share with anyone. Still it is there. Within himself, he says: "I can't do this."

Another man and another woman. They're married for sixteen years. Children came and grew into play age. Now evenings and weekends are spent going to games and recitals, doing schoolwork, and attending meetings. All seemed well; all seemed normal. Sure their marriage had lost the wonder and excitement of its first years, and they have their disagreements, but they've learned how to work through them. They knew it was wrong to avoid some issues, but each knew that certain topics would bring reactions of upset rather than reason. Still, the other women she knew seemed to have it so much easier. The other men he knew seemed to have much less stress. Then one of the children fell ill — seriously ill. Caring for this child, caring for the others, caring for each other added new levels of stress to their lives. And both the husband and wife said to themselves: "I can't do this."

The priest went from one assignment to another where he felt loved and respected. But those were easy assignments. At first he was a new priest that everyone helped. In those days his own gifts outshone his limitations. He went from place to place as he was assigned — even becoming a pastor of a small parish. And then he was sent to a large parish that had seen three pastors in four years. The people there had enough with new pastors. Many of them challenged everything he attempted. Every program had its detractors. Every homily had its critics. Every week brought new unsigned mail that he refused to read, but whose existence still upset him. He kept plugging along, telling himself that he was sent to the parish for a reason that God knows and he might never know. Still as one battle followed another, the thought began to clarify itself. For the first time in his life he wondered, afraid even to state it. The thought kept coming to him, though. It was a simple thought, a horrible thought, one he never expected. The thought was: "I can't do this."

And the gay man or woman who are trying to live chaste lives in the middle of a society that tells them that they should turn from morality, and the college students who try to live their faith in spite of all the times that they are told that all they avoided in high schools is acceptable in college, and the single man or woman who hold on to morality with both hands — all of these and so many more are tempted to say: "I can't do this."

"I can't do this." No, you can't young mother, young father, older husband and wife, established priest, gay man, gay woman, college student, single person. No, you can't do it. At least, you can't do it alone. But you are not asked to do it alone. You are not alone. You entered the marriage hoping to have a family with God as its center. You work hard to teach your children to make Christian choices. You chose the priesthood to serve God. You made a determination to live chastely — gay man, woman,



selfish. God's love is prior to, and greater than, any of your sins or failures.

Our God is a God of invitation. God invites us all into relationship, into the divine life. Our worthiness depends only on our willingness to say "yes". So, let us say "yes." Let us forget all of our successes and failures, all of our virtues and vices. Let us simply say "yes" to God's love. The wedding banquet is prepared. Come to the feast. —taken from the writings of Father George Smiga, which appear on the internet

GIFTS ON GOD'S TERMS:

Wedding registries. Christmas lists. Return policies. Gift cards. No one can deny that these modern conveniences make our lives easier. What do they all have in common? Personal preference. In each of these things, we have a say over the gift we receive. It's something to which we've become accustomed. But does God work that way?

The Scripture Readings for this 28th Week in Ordinary Time can seem incongruous — even jarringly so. Both Paul and Isaiah are optimistic, hopeful, and filled with confidence in God's bounty. Isaiah speaks of "rich food and choice wines," death destroyed, and sorrow wiped away forever [Isaiah 25:6-10]. Then comes the famous Psalm 23, where having the Lord as our shepherd means we "shall not want." Finally, Paul, in his letter to the Church at Philippi, gives an assurance that, as God provided for St. Paul's needs, so too will God provide for the Philippians — and for us [Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20].

In Matthew's Gospel, the parable of the wedding feast is filled with things that ought to make us uncomfortable. A fabulous banquet invitation refused for no evident reason. The brutal murder of the king's servants and the king's retributive punishment. And while things seem to improve at a "come one, come all" style banquet, the parable still ends with a party-goer cast out for improper attire [Matthew 22:1-14]. How do we reconcile all of this?

In an era of online grocery delivery and the growing "internet of things," it's becoming increasingly easy to expect to experience life on our terms. God, however, doesn't seem to operate that way. In Jesus' parable, the king holds out an invitation, only to have it repeatedly rejected. Is the gift so unimportant? We should hesitate to judge those in the parable too harshly — modern church attendance numbers tell a similar story.

When the invitation is accepted, Jesus highlights not the grateful guests, but the under-dressed. Why? He took the gift of the king, but he didn't truly receive it. His casual, offhand manner at the wedding conveys that he didn't really understand the importance of the invitation in the first place.

This parable raises important questions. Is it that difficult to humble ourselves? Is it that difficult to receive a gift on God's terms rather than our own?

The abundant gifts God offers can make people uncomfortable. Sanctifying grace? That comes through weekly reception of the sacraments. Abundant life in heaven? That requires an adherence of our hearts to the challenging ethos of the Gospel.

In Paul's acceptance of God's providence, he clearly states that he has lived in both "humble circumstances" and "abundance," that he has been well-fed and gone hungry. For him, the gift of God wasn't the ongoing fulfillment of wants, but perfect fulfillment of needs. This attitude requires humility — the ability to recognize the potential of providence in every situation, even if the gift doesn't perfectly match our preferences.

We need to allow God's word to challenge our perception. God's abundance is waiting for us, but it might not look like we think it will. Let's pray for the inner transformation we need so that, when the invitation comes, we'll find ourselves ready to embrace it.

—taken from the writings of Anna Carter, which appear on the internet.



TO THE HEIGHTS — FINDING GOD IN NATURE:

July 4th is not only Independence Day, it is also the Feast Day of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, a young Italian man who lived in the early 20th century. Frassati is well known for his relatable youthfulness. He died at just 24 years old, and was selfless in his acts of charity, and his adventurous spirit.

“Verso l’alto” has become Frassati’s motto of sorts — a phrase he wrote on a photo of himself climbing a mountain — “to the heights.” This motto encapsulates Frassati’s approach to life — whether it was weekend climbing trips with his friends or his daily attempts to reach the heights of the heavenly Kingdom through his service to the poor and ill.

Frassati is the patron saint of the outdoors and of those seeking the heights. Little by little, following his example, I’ve learned to find God in the glory of His creation. I think Frassati and his adventurous spirit are onto something here — climbing, the mountains, and outdoor explorations are a sure way to the heights of God’s love.

St. John Paul II — a fellow outdoorsmen and fan of Frassati — once spoke to the Italian Alpine climbing club with these words: “Have special concern for the young, to train them to follow the type of life that the mountains demand of their devotees. It requires rigorous virtues in those who practice it — strict discipline and self-control, prudence, a spirit of sacrifice and dedication, care and solidarity for others.

“Help your members also to be contemplatives, to enjoy ever more deeply in their mind the message of creation. In contact with the beauties of the mountains, in the face of the spectacular grandeur of the peaks, the fields of snow and the immense landscapes, we enter into ourselves and discovers that the beauty of the universe shines not only in the framework of the exterior heavens, but also that of the soul that allows itself to be enlightened, and seeks to give meaning to life. From the things that it contemplates, in fact, the spirit is lifting up to God on the breath of prayer and gratitude towards the Creator.”

Many of us have seen a beautiful sunset, or witnessed the enormity of God’s creation. It leaves us breathless, doesn’t it? That’s because, as St. John Paul II says, our very breath is being elevated to God’s peaceful embrace. We see the beauty of our Creator, and we’re reminded of an even greater miracle — the God who created the world created us, too.

How does it feel to be a masterpiece of God, even grander than the highest peaks or most radiant sunsets?

I blame Frassati for leading me to the sport of rock climbing. He and his friends scaled the heights of Italian mountain ranges in their free time. Tennessee hills aren’t exactly the same, but the same life lessons apply. Life is Like Climbing. If you’ve ever tried your hand at rock climbing, perhaps you can see how there is lot to learn about God in the metaphor of this sport.

For example, let’s take my last climbing adventure outdoors. After about a half hour hike with ropes and gear, it was my turn to climb a route on top rope — meaning that I was connected to a belayer at the other end of the rope to protect me from falling — similar to a pulley system. My belayer tied into his harness and looked over my gear and knots. With his “all clear”, I proceeded upwards. As I climbed, I didn’t really feel my belayer. I knew he was there, taking up each inch of slack in the rope as I progressed; however, it was easy to think it was just me alone on the wall.

Until I reached the crux — the most difficult set of moves in the route. “Beta?” I called down to my belayer — using my hip climber slang [beta = advice] to alert him to my discomfort. Arms growing weary, I shook as he pointed out what I needed to do next. Following his advice, I proceeded up the overhanging roof of the route until I tried for a hold just out of reach. I couldn’t possibly do it, I thought, and let go. Maybe I didn’t notice my belayer much before, but now I couldn’t ignore him. Catching my fall, he held me in place; while he waited patiently, I rested, gathering up the strength to start back up the



route.

I wanted to give up, but my belayer urged me on. He could see how far I had come, whereas I was stuck with tunnel vision, discouraged about the one move before me. Reluctantly, I continued. Taking a trusting leap, I reached for the hold and grabbed it. My belayer cheered from below — “You’ve got this,” he assured me. I continued to the top, knowing full well that without my belayer I’d have been a goner.

Sound like anyone we know? God’s the best belayer out there.

As we struggle and tire on our quest to the top of God’s Kingdom, we’re never left alone. We may feel like it’s just us alone on the wall, but God is always supporting us; He feels every struggle and every ounce of progress during our journey. He climbs with us — closely and intimately. And when we fall, it is in His arms that we rest — regaining our strength. His is the voice that encourages us with fervor: Verso l’alto! Onwards — to the heights!

Frassati and St. John Paul II both loved finding Christ in the outdoors. Considering the depths of faith and charity they enacted, I think we could all benefit from taking a few notes.

So how can we make “verso l’alto” our own motto? First step... get up! Get out! Get active! It’s always tempting to sleep in and lounge around — to hide away in our beds instead of facing the cooler temperatures. But Christ doesn’t call us to comfort; He calls us to greatness.

Schedule a regular date with the God of the universe by beholding His beauty. Go on a hike, climb a mountain — with appropriate safety gear and training — watch the sunrise or sunset. Whatever you can do to get outside and see Him, do it!

Equally as important, be intentional with this time. Make it less about the Instagram posts or the fitness step goals, and more about being present to God. Bring your Bible. I love cracking open the Psalms — maybe start with Psalm 8. Pray the Rosary as you walk, or simply speak with God, listening to Him in the sound of the animals or the crunching leaves around you. No matter how you pray best, looking at His handiwork can only help!

Lastly, be still. It’s tough to find time to be quiet or alone in our daily lives. But when we can carve away this dedicated time to set down our screens and just be with God, we will experience the beautiful paradox of contemplation — we are alone, yet indescribably connected — to ourselves, to God, and to one another. In the silence, God draws near. In the beauty, He speaks to our souls in a language much stronger than words can ever convey.

So be attentive. God wants to see you. And He wants you to see Him, too.

—taken from the writings of Faith Noah, a college student.

LIFE TEEN and EDGE:

Our Life Teen and EDGE youth group is meeting in-person again. We will meet for an hour beginning at 11:30 AM following our 10 AM Sunday Mass in the Chapel. If

you are unable to join us, there are many resources available for you on the Life Teen website — lifeteen.com. 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].**

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH OURSELVES:

Prayer that leads to the beauty of the image within is difficult for it requires honesty and humility. It requires freedom from expectations, projections, false hopes and self-centeredness. It means to be able to say, I am who I am with my strengths and weaknesses, gifts and failings.

—Ilia Delio, OSF