

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer for Conversion ~

O kind and merciful God,
in Your Hands I place my hopes and fears,
my likes and dislikes,
my happiness and unhappiness,
my joys and sorrows.
I offer You the needs of my perishable body
and the more important ones of my imperishable soul.
I do not have to be afraid for my soul
as long as I leave it in Your loving care.

Great are my failings,
but even greater is my hope in You.
It is stronger than my weakness,
greater than my difficulties,
and mightier than death.

Though assailed by temptation,
I will hope in You.
Though I may falter because of weakness,
I will continue to trust in You.
Though I may not live up to my promises,
I will confidently seek grace from You
to renew my living the Gospel.

You are my Father and my God,
the ground of my salvation.
You are my gracious and loving Father,
and I am Your beloved child.
I place myself in Your Arms
and ask for Your blessing
and loving embrace.
I place all my trust in You.
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.

FAITH EDUCATION:

Our Faith Education classes will resume on **January 21st**. Our Faith Education classes meet on **Sundays from 8:45—9:45 AM**. This is followed by **Mass in Our Lady Chapel at 10 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: January 28-February 4**. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.

**2023 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS:**

If you would like a copy of your 2023 Contributions to Our Lady Chapel, please call the chapel office [440-473-3560] and we will be glad to send it out to you. Since many have their own records and do not need to receive this statement, we have found that this is much more economical for us — as good stewards, we are trying to cut postage expenses from a mass mailing. Let us know if you need the statement sent to you and we will be glad to get it to you. Thanks for your understanding.

**LIVING THE CONTRADICTIONS:**

The question we must ask ourselves is: “How do we live the contradictions?” Live them —not just endure them or relieve ourselves from the tension by quickly resolving them. The times when we meet or reckon with our contradictions are often turning points, opportunities to enter into the deeper mystery of God. I’m deliberately using the word mystery to point to depth, an open future, immense freedom, a kind of beauty and truth that cannot be fully spoken or defined.

Many mystics speak of the God-experience as simultaneously falling into an abyss and being grounded. This sounds like a contradiction, but when we allow ourselves to fall into the abyss — into hiddenness, limitlessness, unknowability, a void without boundaries — we discover it’s somehow a rich, supportive, embracing spaciousness where we don’t have to ask — or answer — the questions of whether we’re right or wrong. We’re being held and so do not need to try to “hold” ourselves together. Please reflect on that.

This might be the ultimate paradox of the God-experience: “falling into the hands of the living God” [see Hebrews 10:31]. When we can give ourselves to it and not fight it or explain it, falling into the abyss is ironically an experience of ground, of the rock, of the foundation. This is totally counterintuitive. Our dualistic, logical mind can’t get us there. It can only be known experientially. That’s why the mystics use magnificent metaphors — none of them adequate or perfect — for this experience.

Mystery is not something we can’t know. Mystery is endless knowability on many different levels. Living inside such endless knowability is finally a comfort, a foundation of ultimate support, security, unrestricted love, and eternal care. It usually takes much of our life to get there; it’s surely what we mean by “growing” in faith. Each soul must learn on its own, hopefully aided by observing other faith-filled people.

The source of spiritual wisdom is to hold questions and contradictions patiently, much more than to find quick certitudes, to rush to closure or judgment as the ego and dualistic mind want to do. The ego wants to know it is right. It wants to stand on its own self-created “solid” ground — not the mysterious solid ground of the abyss. This is why so much religion remains immature and is often a hiding place for people who want to be in control instead of people trained in giving up control to a Loving Presence.

A mature friend or a good spiritual director will companion us as we learn how to negotiate the darkness, how to wait it out, how to hold on, how to live in liminal or threshold space. We are all called to live the mystery of God’s oneness with us.

—Father Richard Rohr, O.F.M.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas.
- For an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine.
- 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.

PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Sue Ryavec, mother of Ron Ryavec [‘16]
- For Gregory Alexander, father of AVI associate Vee.
- For Eileen Stark, sister-in-law of former Gilmour teacher, Theresa Stark.
- For Jean Smith, mother of Matthew [‘08], Tyler [‘10] and Alec [‘13] Smith.
- For Peter DeCrane [‘73], brother of Michael DeCrane [‘76], uncle of Meredith [‘99], Michael [‘01], Matthew [‘02], and Craig [‘04] Panzica, brother-in-law of former Trustee, Tim Panzica [‘73], and Son of former trustee and corporate chairman, Vincent DeCrane.
- For Therese Grega
- For Kevin Bishop, husband of Molly O’Toole [‘77], brother –in-law of Diannae Taylor [‘73]
- For Gary Grissinger, brother-in-law of Father Tom Streit, C.S.C.
- For Jerry Walker, brother of Housekeeping associate, Kelly, and uncle of Natasha.
- For Sister Kathleen McCafferty, S.N.D.
- For John Brown, father-in-law of security director, John Dalessandro.
- For Virginia Guttman

CHRIST “IN US” IS LIFE-CHANGING:

Let me make it quite clear that when Christians say the Christ-life is in them, they do not mean simply something mental or moral. When they speak of being “in Christ” or of Christ being “in them”, this is not simply a way of saying that they are thinking about Christ or copying Him. They mean that Christ is actually operating through them — that the whole mass of Christians are the physical organism through which Christ acts — that we are His fingers and muscles, the cells of His body. And perhaps that explains one or two things. It explains why this new life is spread not only by purely mental acts like belief, but by bodily acts like baptism and Holy Communion. It is not merely the spreading of an idea; it is more like evolution — a biological or super-biological fact. There is no good trying to be more spiritual than God. God never meant man to be a purely spiritual creature. That is why He uses material things like bread and wine to put the new life into us. We may think this rather crude and unspiritual. God does not. He invented eating. He likes matter. He invented it. —C.S. Lewis

**A GIFT:**

The more you sense the rareness and value of your own life, the more you realize that how you use it, how you manifest it, is all your responsibility.

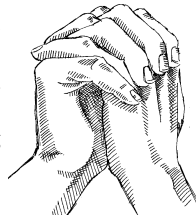
—Kobun Chino Otagawa Roshi

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Father Larry Jerge, C.S.C., who is under the care of Hospice.
- For Loretta Seidl, sister of Brother Robert Lavelle, C.S.C., who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For John Zippay, family friend of Bernadette and Stephen Ritley, who is critically ill.
- 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 Nora Beach, wife of former Gilmour Religion Instructor, Bob Beach, mother of Hannah [‘98] and Miriam [‘99] Beach, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Chuck Campanella, father of Anthony Campanella, who continues in rehab following serious surgery.
- 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 Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian [‘09], Rosa [‘12] and Edwin [‘17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- 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 Robert O’Neill, grandfather of Bobby O’Neill [‘33], who is undergoing treatment for bladder cancer.
- For Josephine Fernando, mother of Melvin [‘83] and Raymond [‘88] Fernando, mother-in-law of Imelda Deogracias Fernando [‘88], who is ill.
- For Lincoln Nye, former Gilmour student, brother of Maddie Nye [‘25], who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For JoAnne Fisher, wife of Jim, mother of Bill [‘10] and PJ, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Brother Roy Smith, C.S.C., who is recovering from surgery.
- For Sister Colette Livingston, O.S.U., who is seriously ill.
- For Pam Spicer, wife of former Gilmour coach, Bob Spicer, who is under the care of hospice.
- For Dennis Kramer, who is undergoing treatment for prostate cancer.
- For Bill Stark, brother-in-law of former Gilmour teacher, Theresa Stark, who is recovering from heart by-pass surgery.
- For Jennifer Krantz, who is undergoing treatment for cancer
- For Tom Bryan, former athletic director, uncle of Georjanna Opalich [‘09], Alexis [‘10] and Spencer [‘12] Antunez, and Morgan Converse [‘11], who is ill.
- For Sarah Lindley, Sister of Gilmour’s Social Studies Teacher, Matt Lindley [‘89], aunt of Benjamin [‘24], Nathan [‘26] and Evan [‘27] Lindley, who is preparing for cancer surgery on Tuesday.



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.



NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, February 24th 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: Lent as the true Valentine’s Day

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:

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| Sunday, January 21: 3 rd Week in Ordinary Time | 10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream |
| Monday, January 22: | NO MASS |
| Tuesday, January 23: | NO MASS |
| Wednesday, January 24: St. Francis de Sales | NO MASS |
| Thursday, January 25: Conversion of St. Paul | NO MASS |
| Friday, January 26: Sts. Timothy and Titus | 8:30 AM and 9:45 AM |
| Saturday, January 27: 4 th Week in Ordinary Time | 5:00 PM In Person only |
| Sunday, January 28: 4 th Week in Ordinary Time | 10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream |

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — FEBRUARY 17th:

Our Savior Lutheran Church — across the street from the Chapel — 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 unloading the trailers and setting up items for distribution and preparing for the food pantry to open. It serves around 150 clients each time. The food pantry serves clients 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.

REFLECTION FOR THE WEEK:

What was it about Jesus' invitation to "Come after me" that caused an immediate affirmative response by Simon, Andrew, James, and John? [Mark 1:14-20]. They did not ask where they were going. They did not go home to pack a bag. Surprisingly to me, James and John's father did not object to being abandoned by his sons. Without question or further thought, they surrendered everything to follow a man known to them as the son of a carpenter. Why? Why did only four respond?

There are other examples of this kind of response also — St. Paul [see Acts 9] and St. Matthew [see Luke 5:27-28]. While these responses at first sight appear to be spontaneous, there clearing are events and experiences that stirred an awakening of the souls within each of them. These events prepared the future disciples to respond — and the same is true within us.

Amid the drudgery of life and the struggle to survive under Roman oppression, the Jewish people must have heard hope in the teachings of John the Baptist. While mending their nets, the fishermen might have wondered about John's exhortation: "The Kingdom of God is near." To ease the pain of life's uncertainties, perhaps they shared their dreams about what it would be like living in God's kingdom. Maybe they prayed for the coming of that kingdom. In any event, they were ready and longing for an invitation the day Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee. Jesus' words filled the emptiness in their souls, melting away doubts or the ability to doubt the carpenter. Would we accept a carpenter's invitation?

The invitation to "Come after me" happens every day. Unlike the fisherman responding to the carpenter, we know a call from Jesus is a call from the Son of God. God longs for us to articulate the hopes and dreams residing in the deepest recesses of our soul and then listen for our invitation. Where might God's invitation take us?

In the Scripture Readings for this 3rd week of Ordinary Time, God calls us once more. God calls more than once. We hear about Jonah being called for the third time. God wants him to go to the great city of Nineveh and announce that God knows their wickedness [Jonah 3:1-10]. At first Jonah decides to run away and takes refuge in a ship, and ultimately in the belly of a whale. But God calls Jonah from the whale's belly, and Jonah decides to sing a great song of praise and thanksgiving.

Now God calls again. The message of the first call is repeated and the prophet, still drying off, takes his walk-in-faith, announcing a time of repentance and reuniting with God. After only one day, everybody in Nineveh hears and responds declaring a forty-day fast. But this is only the beginning of the story for Jonah; the call goes on for the rest of his life.

Mark's Gospel [1:14-20] has three calls as well. Over the course of the past few weeks, we have seen pictures of John's baptizing and handing over his disciples to the following of Jesus. Today we see that the end of John's life is near — he has been arrested and now is in Herod's jail. Jesus now takes His rightful place as the "New-Caller" to right living. This is Mark's major theme — Jesus is the "Son of God" who has come to be the Savior of the World.

The second call is to the two fishing-partners — Simon and Andrew. They are casting their nets, but we do not know if they are actually catching anything. Jesus, however, catches them by inviting them to follow. Their response is instantaneous — His new form of fishing.

The third call and response is made to two more brothers — James and John. They too respond instantaneously. What is significant about their departure is that they are leaving family — they leave their father and the hired hands in the boat. Thus, they set out — but to "where" they do not know.

The Sacrament of Confirmation has much to do with listening and being caught-up in what is heard. Simon, Andrew, James and John listened and were caught. They had to be strengthened often to that same call because they listened also to other calls from within and around them.

**ON-GOING CHANGE:**

We spend so much time arguing about whether a person can live in the belly of a whale for three days and three nights that we actually forget why the author of Jonah originally wrote his well-known book. Scholars for a long time have concluded these small three chapters aren't to be taken literally. People read and saved them not because of their biological marvels, but because of their theological message. I often tell my students since the demise of Monty Python, the only group who can do justice to Jonah is the *Saturday Night Live* crew. Yet even though the writer chose to convey his theology through classic sarcasm, his message is one of the most biting in all of Scripture [Jonah 3:1-10].

It — like all the Scripture Readings for this 3rd Week in Ordinary Time — revolves around conversion. How does one get from point A to point B — not geographically but psychologically? Our sacred authors presume only those who continually move from one point to another have true biblical faith. The rest are just treading water.

Biblical faith is constantly moving — it never stops growing and evolving. Unlike the catechism faith many of us grew up with, it isn't a static experience — a specific amount of dogmas and teachings we're to memorize and eventually "believe in." The only movement I can remember back then consisted in each catechism we studied containing more pages than the prior one. My faith grew because my catechism grew. Yet no matter how much I studied, it didn't lead to conversion. Though I knew more, I still stayed in the same basic place.

In many ways we're looking in a mirror when we hear about Jonah. Everyone in the book goes through a change — the sailors, the Ninevites, the animals — even God — except Jonah. He insists on maintaining the same frame of mind until the non-bitter end. Jonah's author directs his book to the "unchangeable believers" among us.

It's important to note that God does not send the prophet to these notorious Ninevite sinners with a message of repentance. On the contrary, it's a message of doom — "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed!" But after Jonah proclaims it, the unexpected happens. Not only do they repent, but their sudden turnabout forces God to repent.

Of course God's behavior creates huge problems for us "Greek-thinking" people. How can God go back on God's word and still be God? The great Hans Walter Wolff once answered that question with one of the deepest biblical insights I've ever encountered: "God doesn't have to be faithful to God's word, as long as God is faithful to God's people." In other words, when God's people repent, God repents.

The gospel Jesus learned that lesson well — He makes constant conversion a condition for carrying on his ministry. This itinerant preacher's basic "stump speech" is simple: To experience the "kingdom of God" — God working effectively in one's life — one must "repent," pull off a 180-degree switch in her or his value system. What once was on the outskirts of one's dos and don'ts is now front and center, and vice versa. He's a demanding leader. Those who can't — or won't — change day by day can't experience God day by day.

That change is certainly behind Jesus' promise to his first four followers — "I will make you fishers of people" [Mark 1:16-20]. He's giving them a brand new focus in their lives, opening a door they never knew existed.

Probably few of us will experience the five-fold turnabout Paul speaks of in his letter to the Church at Corinth — to say the least, that's a little drastic [1 Corinthians 7:29-31]. But the possibility is there for everyone. Who knows what will happen when we agree to convert?

There's no "off button" on that machine.

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

realizing that not even our Scriptures are free from images of God that reflect our frailties, saying more about us than about God.

As we hear a bit about Jonah today, we're aware that his story isn't an historical account of a fellow who spent a while in a whale, went on to a successful preaching career and finally became furious with God for not wreaking vengeance on a sinful but repentant people. Actually, we can read the Book of Jonah as the comic book of the Bible, a tale to make us laugh — until we recognize ourselves in the ridiculous conclusion of the story [Jonah 3:1-10].

The Scripture Reading for this 3rd Week in Ordinary Time focuses on Jonah's successful call for conversion, ending with the statement that God "repented of the evil that he had threatened." This statement needs to be understood in context. In the variety of images of God we find in Scripture, we hear about God as everything from a tender mother [see Numbers 11:12], to a God of dreadful vengeance [see Psalm 137:7-9, or Nahum 1:2]. Our ancestors in the faith — like many of us — projected their expectations on God and counted on God to unleash divine power to destroy the unrighteous. That's quite a different image from Jesus' description of his father who cares if a sparrow falls and waits patiently for a wayward child [see Matthew 10:29]. A vengeful image of God reflects nothing of the compassion Jesus consistently demonstrated.

We hear something quite different with Mark's portrayal of the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Careful reading shows us that the only words Jesus actually preaches in the first chapters of Mark's Gospel are: "This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the good news" [Mark 1:14-20]. From Mark 1 to 4, Jesus calls disciples, heals people and converses with them; he also gets into arguments with religious authorities — warning them that they are in danger of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. But through all of that, the only actual words of Jesus that we hear is Jesus' call to repentance.

We might say that those words of Jesus — referring to fulfillment, the reign of God, repentance and belief in good news — are the core message of the entire Gospel for Mark. Everything else that Jesus said and did demonstrated the meaning of that message — emphasizing "repent and believe", two words which might ultimately signify the same thing. Jesus' call to repentance, metanoia, invited people to take on a new mindset.

Representing his Father, Jesus didn't focus on sin. He urged people to believe that the reign of God — a world moving unstoppably toward unity in love — was happening in their midst. In calling them to metanoia, Jesus invited others to see what he saw — that the world was on the way to a future in which God would be all in all — and that future was already appearing.

That message was so attractive that people began to follow him. Many continued to watch him and listen to him, gradually getting caught up in the contagious vision he offered. A chosen few accepted the invitation to throw their lot in with him and join his cause. They entered into a process of learning, of discipleship, in the course of which they found themselves transformed and giving their lives in imitation of Jesus. The more this happened, the more the announcement of the reign of God became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Jesus' announcement of the nearness of the reign of God was not one and done. The reign of God describes a web of relationships that continually grows, drawing more and more people into unity with God and neighbor — and with all of creation. Each generation is invited to develop that web in the ways most appropriate to their context, accepting the task of adapting the Gospel message so that it remains both faithful and relevant.

Today, Christ and all our ancestors in the faith invite us to adopt the mindset that expects to see that "this is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand."

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



These young people are in that same tension between the many calls of this world and the one call of Jesus to right living. Yes, the sacrament is about a strength for living; but what is more important is the inner strength to listen for the encouraging — and often challenging — voice of Jesus inviting us to real life. The doing will follow what is taken in or what catches us up.

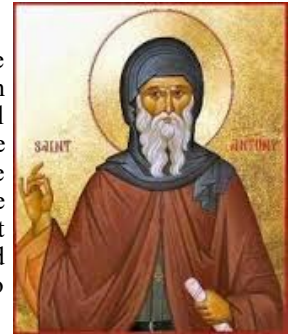
Each sacrament is a graceful strengthening, of course. They all have this in common — "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full." Each sacrament strengthens the recipient to live as a sacrament of Jesus. Confirmation offers the grace to resist alien voices which can sound so attractive and full of life. We are not abandoned to our own selfish fishing in which we become tangled in our own nets and never leave our old boats and castings.

God invites us to move into a deeper relationship that includes the promise that God will never abandon us. The invitation does not end the uncertainty or hardships of life, but as our trust grows, so does our ability to see God in all things and accept the world as it is — we become more of our true selves. We grow into a person that is ready to set the world on fire. How might we prepare for God's invitation?

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

WHAT IS OUR OBLIGATION?

St. Anthony of Egypt, whose feast day we celebrated this past week, is the Father of Monasticism. St. Anthony once said: "The time is coming when people will be insane, and when they see someone who is not insane, they will attack that person saying: 'You are insane because you are not like us.'" We name "difference" madness, and we make mad attempts to stamp out the "other." But the Desert Monastics — the most "catholic" of Catholics in an age of pristine revelation — would have none of it. Anthony makes no doubt about it — exclusion in the name of God is the very worst of religious sins. God speaks in many tongues and to every color and age of people. It is not ours to decide where God's favor lies.



But it is ours to see as a spiritual task the obligation to come to our own opinions. We are not to buy thought cheaply. We are not to attach ourselves to someone else's decisions like pilot fish and simply go with the crowd. We are meant to be thinking Christians.

Religious persecution of blacks and Irish and Protestants and women and gays and Muslims, just because it is the tenor of the time, is to our eternal shame. To make these things acts of faith — which all of us have over time — is the greatest infidelity to our Creator God. It is the very kind of rejection that raged against Jesus. He was a Galilean. And he had the gall to speak up for Canaanites and lepers and women and Samaritans and the poor and the stranger in the land. He refused to bow to the social pressure that comes with being "other." So they cast him out of the pale of his religion, or, like Nicodemus, snuck in to see him only at night, or in the square called: "Crucify him, crucify him, crucify him."

And Jesus left to all of us the obligation to speak up on issues that threaten to erode our humanity. To speak out for the innocent and oppressed. To speak on, however long it takes and whatever the pressures ranged against us. To speak up when we hear around us strategies of those who would balance the national budget by denying the hungry food stamps, and children good education, and the unemployed and underpaid decent lives, and the strangers in the land a way to become community.

Our obligation is not to be like those who would secure themselves by making others insecure. Our obligation is to be like Jesus. And that is anything but insane.

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

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

Do not do anything which you cannot offer to God.

—St. John Vianney

KAIROS AND METANOIA:

There are two very interesting words used in Mark's Gospel — "time" and "repent". In Greek these two words are "kairos" and "metanoia" — "time" and "conversion" or "repentance". Jesus said: "The time has come" [Mark 1:16-20].

For us there is only one word for time; but in Greek there are two words "Kairos" and "chronos". "Chronos" means the passage of time. We use it in English when we say that someone has a chronic illness. Often this is misunderstood as meaning that they have a very serious illness, but actually it means a very long illness. A chronic illness is one that goes on over many years. He's got a case of chronic arthritis, for example.

"Kairos" is something different — and this is the word that Mark uses. It means a propitious moment — a suitable time. By Jesus saying the time has come, he means that this is the favorable moment for him to begin his ministry. This is the time appointed by God for his salvation to be made manifest to the world. The hour has come and Jesus begins his ministry.

But each of us has his or her own Kairos — our own propitious moment. There is a time in each of our lives when things come to a head and we are faced with a fundamental choice — a sacred moment when Jesus confronts us with a choice — when he invites us to make a decision.

Maybe you have already experienced your particular Kairos long ago. You can look back on your life and realize that at a certain age everything pointed in a particular direction and you chose the road to follow in life. Maybe over the years since then there have been many fluctuations, but I am certain that you do not regret the decision you made to deepen your life with Christ.

But maybe that hour is yet to come. Look at Saint Dismas — the person we call the good thief. His hour came at the last possible moment — but come it did. How could he have predicted that it would come as he was dying on a cross, and that his neighbor up there on Calvary would be the Divine Savior Himself?

In the New Testament this word Kairos is very connected with the other important word in Mark's Gospel — "metanoia" or "conversion". Jesus says: "The Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the Good News." This is probably the shortest summary anywhere of the message of Jesus, and it is a call that echoes down through the centuries to us today. Jesus says to each one of us now: "The Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the Good News."

Metanoia quite literally means "turning around". That is what repentance means, turning around from one's old way of life and beginning to live a new life. Ask any alcoholic or drug addict. They know exactly what this turning around means. To give up an addiction — whether it be to alcohol, drugs, spending or sex, or any other addiction for that matter — absolutely requires a complete reorientation of one's life.

It is the same with sin. If we are to try to give up being selfish, spiteful, jealous, envious, greedy or deceitful it means a complete turning around. It means going in a totally different direction.

It is no mistake that I compare sin with addiction. Sin is addictive. I used to be chaplain in Eastwood Park Women's Prison and ten minutes in there would tell you that crime is addictive — so is sin. It's a downward spiral. It is allowing evil into your life and letting it fester there; the only cure is to call on the help of God and to walk away — to leave it behind just like those disciples left their nets on the shore.

Deeply ingrained bad habits are best countered by introducing deeply ingrained good habits. The addict knows this. The addict has to substitute going to AA for going to the local bar. We have to do the same. If we don't go to Jesus we will go to the devil.

Metanoia means more than just simply turning; we also have to go in a different direction. Why



you know, the United States is now in the process of confronting and possibly invading that very country. However, what the Book of Jonah tells us is clear. If we go to war with Iraq, we can never presume that God is on our side. War should always be a last resort. Even a justified war is always a tragedy, because in every war innocent men, women, and children will die. We can imagine God tolerating a war, but we should never imagine God endorsing a war. For whoever suffers in war, whoever dies in war, belongs to God. God does not love Jews more than Assyrians, or Americans more than Iraqi. God simply sees all people as God's children.

So far from telling us a lie, this remarkable fish story from the Hebrew Bible reveals something true about our God. It tells us how God is always above any of the divisions or conflicts that divide us. It tells us why God always prefers peace to war, life to death, mercy over vengeance. Now I know that we live in a complicated world. I believe that we must take steps to protect ourselves from those who would harm us. But as our country seeks a way to do this, we as believers must remember where our God stands. Jesus knew the message of the Book of Jonah. For Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful for they will obtain mercy. Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God" [see Matthew 5]. Those are words by which we are called to live.

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

ATTENDANCE:

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a Registration Form [name, address, phone number, children, etc.] indicating this fact, if you have not already done so. Such information not only helps us to know who is attending Our Lady Chapel; it also is of great assistance to us in record keeping [for our friend, the IRS] of any contributions which you may make.

ENVELOPES:

- When you need a **new supply** of envelopes, please feel free to take a supply of them from the table in the vestibule, or call Father John at the Campus Ministry Office [473-3560].
- When you **use** your envelope, please make sure that **your number** is on it. If you need to know your number, please call the Campus Ministry Office. Thanks.

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Baskets are located on the pillars just inside the center door when you enter the chapel. Please place your offering in the basket. Baskets will not be passed during the offertory time. Your offering will help offset chapel daily operating expenses. When you choose to use the envelopes, you can request a printout of your offerings for the year to submit to the IRS. God bless you.

Total Offerings: Saturday [1/13/24] ----- \$ 185.00
Total Offerings: Sunday [1/14/24] ----- \$ 310.00

ALLOW GOD TO MOLD YOU:

When you face the sun you get a tan, but when we stand before Jesus in the eucharist, we become Eucharist we become saints!

—Blessed Carlo Acutis

THE REIGN OF GOD:

Some people approach the New Testament as if it were a dogmatic history recounting what was, what ought to be and offering a privileged preview to all that is to come. If they're too fundamentalist, they'll seriously think about plucking out their eye [see Matthew 18:9] — or at least strive to never look at anything that might be tempting. In old-time religious life, religious sisters and brothers were admonished to keep "custody of the eyes" — an avoidance of looking at "worldly" things — especially members of the opposite sex. In our day, we interpret Scripture in its historical and cultural context,

OF WALES AND WAR:

An old fisherman found himself at the pearly gates of heaven and was greeted by St. Peter. “Friend,” said Peter, “what are you doing here?” “I want to get in,” said the fisherman. “I want to enter heaven.” “I’m sorry,” said St. Peter, “but you can’t come in. You’ve simply told too many lies during your life.” This caused the fisherman to fall on his knees and plead: “Have a heart Peter. Remember you were a fisherman once yourself.”

Fishermen and fish stories are notorious for exaggeration. Fish stories often disregard the truth. This, however, is not the case in the Book of Jonah — which is perhaps the most famous fish story of all time. The Scripture Reading that we have for this 3rd Week in Ordinary Time is the only time that the Book of Jonah appears in a weekend liturgy, and we are at a great disadvantage because we have only a piece of this story. If we were to understand the message of the Book of Jonah, we would not find an exaggeration or a lie. We would discover an astounding revelation, an startling truth concerning God’s mercy.

The section that we just heard from the Book of Jonah describes Jonah’s preaching at Nineveh [Jonah 3:1-10]. It tells us that at his preaching the entire city listens to what he says, repents and believes in God. Therefore, God extends mercy to the city. In itself this small section seems like a straightforward account of a prophet preaching, people listening and repenting; but there is much more to the story of Jonah than this.

In order to really understand what this story of Jonah is about, we need to know who the Ninevites were. Nineveh was the capitol of the ancient empire of Assyria, and the Assyrians were the most violent and feared people in the ancient world. They were always seeking to extend their empire and they did so by whatever means available. They were violent and ruthless. The Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and almost captured Jerusalem. Therefore, all the people of the ancient world, but particularly the Jews, hated the Assyrians. So did Jonah. So when God asked Jonah to go and preach in Nineveh, Jonah did not want to go. Jonah was afraid that his preaching might be the very excuse that God needed to forgive and show mercy to the Assyrians. Jonah did not want that to happen. He did not want his enemies to receive God’s mercy. Therefore, when God asks Jonah to go to Nineveh, he runs away. This is recounted in the first part of the Book of Jonah. Jonah books passage on a ship to Tarshish, trying to run away from God’s command. This is where the fish comes in. God sends a storm, Jonah ends up in the water, and the fish comes and swallows him.

God does not intend to hurt Jonah. God wants to stop Jonah — stop him from running away. So in the section we just heard today, Jonah goes, under duress, and preaches to the Assyrians. His worst fears are realized. His enemies repent and God shows them mercy. God forgives them despite their wicked ways. The conclusion of the Book of Jonah, which comes after today’s reading, is a prolonged conversation between God and Jonah in which God tries to convince Jonah not to be angry because mercy was shown to the Assyrians. God says to Jonah, “I know you are upset with me. I know that you are angry because I forgave and showed mercy to the Assyrians. But what do you expect me to do? There are over 120,000 people living in the great city of Nineveh and they need me as much as you do. I can’t forget them. I have to be concerned about them.”

It is clear that the Book of Jonah is a fable written by a Jew to tell us that we should never believe that God hates our enemies as we do. This inspired book from the Hebrew Bible reveals once and for all whose side God is on. It insists that God is on all sides. Or more correctly, God does not take sides in the numerous divisions and conflicts that so often divide humanity.

How is this ancient story of Jonah relevant to our situation? It speaks to us in a dramatically direct way. In an irony of history, the ancient city of Nineveh is located in what is today modern-day Iraq. As



else would we turn around? As with the disciples, following Jesus meant turning around one’s life, leaving our former way of life and following Jesus. Turning around in order to go after him. We have to leave our nets on the ground and begin to live a new life. In this new life we live with Jesus. We spend our days always conscious of his closeness to us. We enter into a state of communion with him. In many different ways he nourishes us and draws us ever closer to himself.

To do this is a big challenge. Maybe you feel that the time for you isn’t just yet. But that time will surely come — the Kairos will arrive. The decision will have to be made. And it will have to be made quickly — putting it off won’t help at all. And once the decision is made, there can be no going back. Once we start we can’t stop and return to our old ways for that would mean rejection of God.

The people of Nineveh heard Jonah’s preaching, and they did what he told them to do — they gave up their evil ways. They fasted and did penance in repentance of their sins, and God relented and drew back his punishment. No one was more surprised at this than Jonah! [Jonah 3:1-10]. The People of Israel regarded the Ninevites as the worst people in the world, and the message of Jonah is that if even these can repent and begin to live a new life then so can anyone.

This is what St. Paul is talking about in his letter to the Church at Corinth [1 Corinthians 7:29-31]. When Paul talks about the “world passing away”, he is referring to more than just the “end times” — he is talking about walking away from our old ways and undertaking a new way of living.

The years of our own lives quickly pass by — a year ago seems like just yesterday. Of course, we don’t know when God will call us to himself. But we know that our life on this earth will certainly come to an end. For all of us our time is running out each day. Time is short; the hour has come for us to choose.

So, let us choose goodness, truth, wisdom and love. Let us take the Lord Jesus to be our guide. Let us go where he leads us. Let his words be on our lips. Let his thoughts be in our heads. Let his joy be in our hearts. Let his love overflow in our lives.

This is the Kairos — now is the favorable time; this is the day of salvation.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Monday: | 2 Samuel 5:1-10, Mark 3:22-30 |
| Tuesday: | 2 Samuel 6:12-19, Mark 3:31-35 |
| Wednesday: | 2 Samuel 7:4-17, Mark 4:1-20 |
| Thursday: | Acts 22:3-16, Mark 16:15-18 |
| Friday: | 2 Timothy 1:1-8, Titus 1:1-15, Mark 4:26-34 |
| Saturday: | 2 Samuel 12:1-17, Mark 4:35-41 |

4th Week in Ordinary Time: Deuteronomy 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 7:32-35, Mark 1:21-28

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].



SEWING FOR THE KINGDOM:

My favorite childhood movie is *The Three Amigos*. In this comedy, three American cowboy-actors come to the realization that their movie career is dwindling, and there's not much waiting for them in America. They receive a curious telegraph from a small town in Mexico inviting them to put on a show. Soon after their arrival, they realize that this is not a movie they are in, but a real-life scenario of a villain who is harassing a tiny villa. Instead of leaving the town to its fate, they help the village in their plight against the menace — El Guapo. In a poignant scene before the final showdown, the villagers are asked: "What is it that this town really does well?" An elderly grandmother responds: "We can sew!" This is met initially by a quizzical look from our would-be heroes, but then the actors begin to brainstorm.

Maybe our four soon-to-be followers of Jesus in Mark's Gospel are like the general population of Santo Poco. Faced with the prospect of helping Jesus build the Kingdom, all they have to offer is their trade. They are fishermen, which seems to be an unlikely asset to the project at hand. These men are not highly educated, nor do they have notable social or political status. They are average businessmen working their nets to earn a living. So what can four fishermen from Galilee do to build the Kingdom of God in a tense Jewish culture that had endured Roman conquest? [Mark 1:16-20].

This is where God's ways are not our ways [see Isaiah 55:8; Psalm 25:4]. God often uses the unthinkable or unimaginable to do the impossible [see 1 Corinthians 1:27]. When Jesus showed up on the shores of Galilee that day, he did not offer a proposition to negotiate, nor did he look for an impressive curriculum vitae from his would-be followers. He simply calls whom He would and empowers them just as they are to extend the boundaries of his Kingdom wherever they are sent. This calling did not cease that day either.

When I had the chance to go to the Holy Land on pilgrimage last March, I found myself on those same shores of Galilee. While I did not meet Jesus in person, I did feel a renewed sense of calling and purpose to the monastic vocation I entered! At each holy site, I renewed my "yes" each time I sensed Jesus renewing his call for my life. In a myriad of ways, Jesus does indeed call all His baptized to share in His mission because the Kingdom has yet to be extended fully.

What about us who benefit from this legacy? What skills do we have that can help build the Kingdom right where we are? Some of us are religious and clerics; some of us are professionals — doctors, lawyers, professors, engineers, businessmen; others are service-minded — counselors, firemen, paramedics, social workers, policemen and women; and still others of us are baristas, cooks, gardeners, students, clerks, attendants, or secretaries.

Just as Jesus used the skills of these four fishermen to eventually change the course of human history, so too can Jesus use whatever human skills or endeavors we have developed in order to extend his Kingdom. These abilities can serve ourselves and our selfish gain or pleasurable comfort. The very same skills and endeavors can impart grace to others. When our skills and endeavors serve the needs of others — and when we serve with humility and generosity — we help extend the boundaries of His Kingdom to those places and to those people who have not encountered it before. When the boundaries extend, the legacy of Jesus continues. If sewing can defeat a villain, then — enter your skillset here — can extend the boundaries of God's Kingdom. Let's start today!

—taken from the writings of Brother John Marmion Villa, O.S.B., which appears on the internet.

CIRCUMSTANCES:

Circumstances have no power over you. One day you're in traffic and it bothers you. The next day you're in a great mood and it doesn't. It's not the traffic. If it was it would always cause the same response. It's not the event or circumstance. It's always your state of mind.

immorality. We cannot be people of faith, if we allow our government to continue any immoral practice. January 22nd is the grim anniversary of Roe vs Wade, the decision of the Supreme Court to allow abortion. Even since it's reversal, people have been clamoring for a "return to the rights of an individual to decide how their body is to be used." Some have raised this decision to the level of one of the articles found in the Bill of Rights. People of faith have gathered in Washington DC and throughout the country to protest this. Of course the liberal elements of the media will show pictures of the few hundreds of abortion supporters and equate them with the tens of thousands who will march in protest. They will also present the Pro-Lifers as fringe radicals, and they will ignore the fact that the majority of Americans are against abortion. What is missing in all this is that those who are marching and protesting throughout the country are doing so because they are people of faith and people who deeply love our country. They cannot sit back and allow lies, and evil, and death to continue.

It is the same for every issue. As Catholics we cannot allow our country to take advantage of the poor and the sick, to shore up its economy on the backs of poorer nations, or to promote our national interests with blood. We cannot sit back and be non-committal to evil around us. Where and when we see evil, we have to react against it. Faith demands consequences — demands action.

Weigel's second statement follows this: **a vocation is something that you are.** In the course of a lifetime, modern people have many careers, many jobs. A young girl may begin as an aide in a day care. Then she may become an Early Childhood teacher. After a while, she may change professions and become a realtor. Maybe, she may go into investing and become a financial consultant. People have many jobs, many careers. But this is not who they are, it is just something they are currently doing.

A vocation is something that you are. That same girl may become a wife and then a mother. Wife and mother are not jobs, they are who she is. They are vocations. Even when her children move out to begin independent lives, she is still a mother — their mother. Even if she and her husband break up, she is still a wife — his wife. The only exception to this would be if it can be shown that she never was a wife in a sacramental sense. Same thing for a man. Same thing for a priest. Priesthood is not a career that can be changed as some other man might change jobs. A person who is called to the priesthood is a priest forever, even if he no longer is in ministry.

When Jesus called Simon and Andrew, James and John, you and me, he did not call us to do something. He called us to be something — He called us to be disciples. Why do you train your children in the faith? Why do you guard against immorality in your home? Why do you worship God daily in your homes, and weekly in Church? We do what we do because this is who we are.

That is why we feel so disjointed when our human limitations take over and we give in to evil. We lose our sincerity, our integrity, when what we do is opposed to whom we are. But when we respond to that call of Christ within us to be Christian in all our actions, then our actions reflect our inner life, the life of Jesus Christ we have been called to embrace. Then we become who we are.

Weigel concludes that people who are determined to live the truth of whom they are — people who are determined to live vocationally — are the most dynamic force in history. Their lives don't just become history — they become His Story, the story of God at work in the world. And that is what Catholicism is about. We want to change the world into God's world. We are willing to do what we need to do to be whom we have been called to be.

The call of Faith — our vocation as Christians — is urgent — just as the call to faith was urgent for the first disciples, for the people of Corinth, and for the people of Ninevah. Faith has consequences. Faith is dynamic. Faith is counter cultural. Faith changes the world. Faith is manifested in the integrity of men and women who live who they are.

May we have the courage to be Catholic.

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



FAITH HAS CONSEQUENCES:

A while back I came upon a book that seems to be intended for young people, but in reality contains wonderful meditations for all of us. Actually, we are all still new to our faith — even if we are in our 80's. Just as the Church is ever ancient ever new, so for me and for all of us, our faith is ever ancient and ever new. The book I'm referring to is George Weigel's: *Letters to a Young Catholic*. Jesus Christ is forever new.

Each chapter of this book presents a particular place in Catholicism — such as the tomb of St. Peter, Baltimore — the first Diocese in the United States, etc. — and then develops a particular topic that is fundamental to Catholicism — like Eucharistic devotion, Marian devotion, the meaning of suffering and death, etc.

In the light of the Scripture Readings for this 3rd Week in Ordinary Time, I would like to present one of these topics as George Weigel presented it.

All three of this week's readings for this 3rd Week in Ordinary Time present an urgent call. Jonah tells the people of Ninevah that their sins have resulted in their suffering God's wrath [Jonah 3:1-10]. They would listen and repent. St. Paul tells the Corinthian Church that time is running out. They need to embrace the Gospel before they have no more time [1 Corinthians 7:29-31]. Jesus begins his preaching by proclaiming: "The time of fulfillment is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel" [Mark 1:16-20]. He then calls his first disciples — Simon and Andrew, James and John.

There is an urgency in God's call that has a profound effect not just upon the person called, but upon others.

This brings us to George Weigel. Weigel's tenth letter speaks about how vocations change lives. He speaks about Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko. Two sentences caught my attention. The first is Faith demands consequences. The second is: a career is a job, an occupation you current have, but a vocation is something that you are.

First, **faith demands consequences**. Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko was a simple young priest of the Archdiocese of Warsaw with a frail voice and weak physical makeup. He had not been a brilliant seminarian. He was assigned to be an assistant priest at St. Stanislos Kosta Parish in Warsaw. In 1980, the 34 year old priest was also asked to minister to the steel workers at a Warsaw steel mill. This was at the time of the Solidarity protests against communism throughout Poland — but particularly in Gdansk. In 1981, the Polish Communist government declared martial law against its own citizens. Shortly after this, Fr. Popieluszko began saying a monthly Mass for the fatherland. At first hundreds, then thousands and then tens of thousands attended the Mass or packed the streets around the Church. Fr. Popieluszko relentlessly repeated the theme given by Pope John Paul II on his first visit to Poland — banish evil with good. He preached non-violence. But he also preached the moral duty of resistance. He told the people that they had to take sides — good or evil, truth or falsehood, love or hatred. Michael Kaufmann of the *New York Times* wrote that here there was a man who was teaching that defiance of authority was an obligation of the heart, of religion, of humanity, and of nationhood.

The people heard — but so did their communist leaders. On October 19, 1984, Fr. Jerzy was kidnapped and murdered. He embodied the truth. He embodied the faith. And he died for the truth and for the faith. Within five years, the communist government fell at the hands of the overwhelming desire of the Polish people to worship when and how they saw fit. Fr. Popieluszko won. As you know, soon after the fall of communism in Poland, communist fell throughout Eastern Europe including what was then the Soviet Union.

Faith demands consequences. We cannot be people of faith if we do not speak out against

MY PRO-LIFE STANCE — THEN AND NOW:

If you had asked me seven years ago if I was pro-life, I would have automatically said: "Personally, yes, but politically, I'm pro-choice." I took the comfortable position — the position that didn't impose my beliefs on anyone else. I was able to take this stance because I knew nothing about abortion statistics, and because I had two major misconceptions about what it meant to be pro-life — [1] pro-life was a political position, and not something required by my faith; [2] pro-life meant you only cared for the rights of the unborn.

I grew up in a devout Catholic family that fiercely valued the dignity of all human life — which is why a narrow pro-life stance didn't appeal to me. Numerous family members were patriots for the most vulnerable — the poor, the uneducated, orphans, the hungry, the sick, the dying, the lonely, the homeless, immigrants and refugees, and the abused. Abortion, though, was not something that came up in conversation — other than to reiterate that it was wrong. So inadvertently, it became a "back burner" issue in my mind. Politics, culture, and media perpetuated the belief that to be "pro-life" meant that you only cared about the rights of the unborn — rather than protecting the rights of ALL human life. Unbeknownst to me, the Catholic Church had an all-encompassing definition: "Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God, and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end — no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being" [CCC, #2258].

Although the Church's interpretation of what it means to be pro-life is so inclusive and wholistic, I had the misconception that a "pro-life advocate" was an ultra-conservative person who only cared about abortion and stopped advocating for people after they were born. I never wanted to be one of those people, so when it came to abortion, I stuck with the "personally, I'm pro-life, but politically, I'm pro-choice" position. But deep down, I knew I needed to make a decision — I couldn't keep my foot in both worlds. And then, relationships challenged me to see the statistics behind the pro-life debate. As He so often does, God put people in my life who helped me see the truth, and showed me the real souls affected by abortion. Because of those people, I no longer personally disagree and remain politically neutral on pro-life issues.



My first encounter with the harsh realities of abortion was when one of my friends told me she had one. I was 20 at the time, and Emma — no real names are used — was 21. She was a beautiful, joyful woman, and a fierce advocate for all kinds of life — from plants to animals to humans. More than anything, Emma loved babies. One day, Emma and I were talking. She kept holding her stomach and looking as though she was in pain. I kept asking what was wrong, and finally I asked: "Are you pregnant?" Her response was almost inaudible: "Not anymore." I was at a loss for words. No one prepares you for a situation like that. So I did the only thing I knew to do — I hugged her and told her I was so sorry she had to go through that. She was confused and upset when I offered her sympathy instead of condemnation. She knew what she'd done was wrong, and she expected me to be the one to scorn her. But I couldn't. I knew Emma need conditional love more than anything in that moment. When I left work that night, I cried for her, for her baby, for the evilness of abortion. I cried for almost an hour. Several months later — the day after Mother's Day — the two of us were talking. I asked how her day had been, and with tears in her eyes, she said: "I celebrated my mom all day, but I couldn't help but think of the fact that I should have had people celebrating my motherhood. I should have a baby right now, but I don't because I was too afraid." Though my heart was moved, my position on abortion did not

change because I still worried I would be imposing my personal beliefs upon her. I thought that if I tried to help by offering a choice, I was being benevolent instead of seeing that I was neglecting so many other people — the mother, the child, the family.

Then Michael came into the picture. Over time, Michael would become a dear friend of mine, and someone who, through the power of invitation, helped me embrace the fullness of the Church's teaching against abortion and see the pro-life movement for what it really is.

When I first met Michael, I was still growing in my faith and was filled with many questions about the teachings of our faith — specifically whether or not abortion should be allowed in the case of rape. I even doubted the goodness of the pro-life movement. Michael was patient and always willing to answer my questions, and his unwavering position made me wonder if perhaps I was looking at things in the wrong light. Instead of judging me or lecturing me, he continually invited me to become more involved in the pro-life movement. When Michael invited me to attend a Right for Life banquet, I reluctantly accepted, thinking I would only encounter people at the event who cared more about politics than people, who only cared about wine and dining. But I was wrong. Most of the people were young and of life with a passion; there was a joy that filled the room. Something stirred within me that night, but I was still unconvinced.

Then, Michael encouraged me to go to the March for Life. There, he promised, I would truly see what this movement was all about. So, I went to the March for Life. I marveled not only at my friends' joy and excitement, but at the hundreds of thousands of people who were marching in D.C. The atmosphere was void of bitterness, judgement, and condemnation. Love was present. Joy was tangible. Perhaps, I thought, there was something to this movement after all.

Then there was Mr. Smith. It was a cold February night. I stood in my friend's kitchen talking to his parents. Somehow, the topic of abortion came up. He looked at me and asked: "So what's the democrat argument for not voting against abortion?" At first I thought he was being insincere, but he genuinely wanted to know. So, I explained what I'd heard for so many years from so many people, something that had been ingrained in me — "There are many pro-life issues, you shouldn't single issue vote." He sighed, and I'll never forget the look of confusion and pain on his face. "So they're still saying that?" he asked, sounding defeated. I nodded. I felt uncomfortable, ashamed.

And then, he said something I'll never forget: "If there was a president of a foreign country who shot thousands of people every day, we would seek to help them. There's not a single person — democrat or republican — who would elect that person to be the President of the United States. And yet, because we can't see them — because they're unborn — we shield our eyes and pretend there are more important issues. That's insane."

He didn't say it with anger, but rather, with sorrow. Then he started sharing statistics — statistics that I had never heard before — about how many innocent babies are killed each day, each year. Never with bitterness, never with judgement; he just laid it all out. Since Roe vs. Wade, over 58 million babies have been aborted; 1.1 million babies are aborted in the U.S. each year; nearly 1 in 4 [22%] of pregnancies end in abortion; 51% of abortions are performed on women less than 25 years of age; approximately 1/3 of American women have had an abortion by age 45; abortion disproportionately affects black and Hispanic women.

I thought I was going to throw up. I was biting back tears. I wanted to run away.

Somewhere from the living room we all heard Mr. Smith's youngest son crying. They'd been so careful to make sure he was asleep, but somehow he'd been in there all along — listening in. The

conversation ended and my heart broke into a thousand pieces as I saw a 7-year-old comprehend the gravity of abortion better than most adults did.

My heart was changed forever.

On one of my trips to the March for Life, I began talking to Olivia — a woman who was several years older than me. I told her about my whole journey with the pro-life movement, and about my friend, Emma. She listened earnestly and thanked me for sharing. When we got to the hotel, I found out that I was sharing a room with Olivia. As we got ready for bed, she suddenly looked up and said to me: "I have to tell you something." I nodded and listened as Olivia told me that she, too, had an abortion; that she had struggled with depression and alcoholism for many years until she finally accepted God's forgiveness and learned to forgive herself. She told me how she often sat in the pew in silence, wishing there was a ministry for women who had abortions at her church so they didn't have to suffer alone. That year at the March for Life, I marched for Olivia and her unborn baby, and for all women who silently suffer from the horrors of abortions.

Since that night, Olivia has found the courage to share her story with hundreds of people. One night, as I listened to her share her story with a group of teens, she mentioned that I helped her find the courage to talk about her experience. I looked up, surprised, and tears filled my eyes. Olivia went on to say that when I told her about Emma, and how I embraced her rather than condemned her, she knew she could trust me with her story. I have never been more honored. Olivia is one of the most holy, courageous people I know — she has taught me the power of forgiveness, the power of love, the power of sympathy. Her story has inspired other women to no longer remain silent.

Thanks to these four people, I've learned that being pro-life is so much more than protecting an unborn child — it's about protecting mothers, fathers, and the family. When one person's life is disposable, all life becomes disposable. So yes, while the pro-life movement encompasses more than just the issue of abortion, abortion is an issue of grave importance and our faith demands we take action against it.

I am not naive in thinking that overturning Roe vs. Wade will fix everything. We have a lot of work to do, and we must begin by being "pro-life" every single day. We must uphold the dignity of every person — we must welcome the stranger; we must stand with the vulnerable; we cannot degrade women; we cannot ignore the poor and forgotten members of our society, the immigrants and refugees, those who are dying, the addicted and abused, and the most vulnerable — those in the womb. Being pro-life is not a march or a movement — it is a way of life. It is not just a personal sentiment, but a call that demands we recognize the goodness of God in every human being and seek to protect life at all costs.

—taken from the writings of Caitlin Sica, a Youth Minister.



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 VIRTUOUS LIFE:

One should not say that it is impossible to reach a virtuous life; but one should say that it is not easy. Nor do those who have reached it find it easy to maintain.

—St. Anthony Of The Desert 11