

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer in the Desert ~

**Lord,
In these days
that blur together,
may grace surprise me
evermore.**

**When the world
stops turning,
may I still see
the splendor of earth,
and find your face in others.**

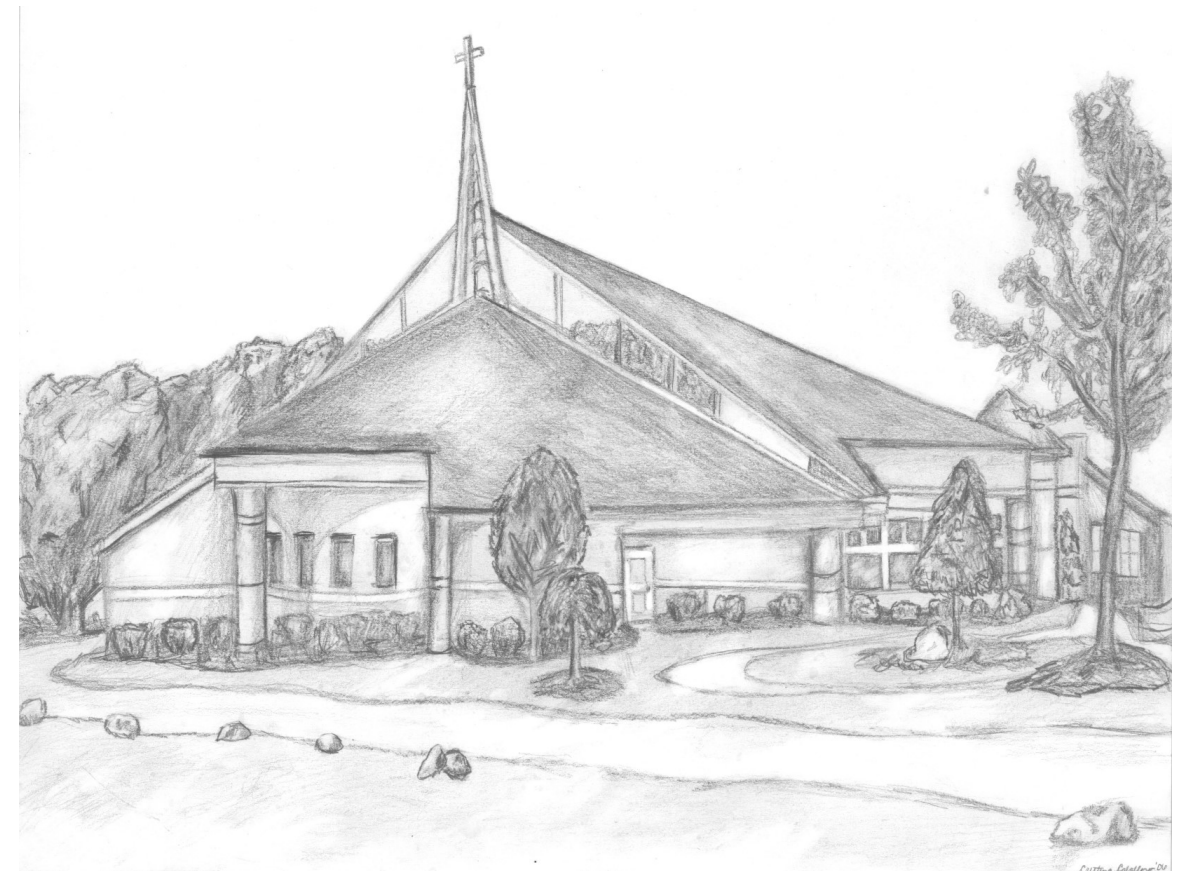
**As I labor
beneath the scorching sun,
may I be grateful
for the work.**

**Thank you, Lord,
for desert days
that help me
love you
all the more.
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.

CONFIRMATION:

On Friday of this week, many of our young people will be confirmed. The Confirmation will take place on **Friday, March 1st** at **7:00 PM** at the **Divine Word Church**. This is a moment of great grace for them and for each of us, as the Holy Spirit enters in our midst again in a special way.

Let us pray for **Roma Alvarez, Aurelia Chiacchiarri, Kevin Shank & Joseph Terranova** and for all our young people during this special time in their lives. And let us also pray that we will all grow into a deeper appreciation of the blessings of this special sacrament.



Confirmation

FAITH EDUCATION:

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**. **Upcoming class dates are: Mar. 3 & 10**. If you have any questions, please contact Patty in the Chapel Office [[440-473-3560].



LENTEN NOTES:

The season of Lent has begun. During this sacred time, each of us is called to spiritual growth — particularly through a turning away from sin. Lent is a time for “new beginnings” — a time to grow in our relationship with God and each other. There are 3 major spiritual practices during Lent to which Scripture calls us: **prayer, fasting, and almsgiving**.

—LENTEN DEVOTIONALS:

On the table in the Narthex of the Chapel are 3 Lenten Devotionals for you. **The Little Purple Book** is a Young Person’s devotional. **The Little Black Book** is for High School and Adults. Finally, **The Word Among Us** is a Scripture centered devotional based on the daily scripture readings.



—LENTEN REGULATIONS:

Good Friday is a day of **fast** for all between the ages of eighteen and fifty-nine. Fasting means that one full meal for the day is allowed, along with two light meals [snacks]. No eating between meals. Those not included in these “ages” are encouraged to take upon themselves some aspects of the fast, whenever possible.

All Fridays during Lent are days of **abstinence** from meat, for those who are fourteen and older. Again, those not included in these “ages” are encouraged to participate whenever possible.

MEN’S RETREAT — SAVE THE DATE:

Thursday, April 25th, from 6:00—8:30 PM will be our annual **Spring Men’s Retreat**. All men of Our Lady Chapel and the Gilmour Academy Men’s Club and their guests are invited to join us. We will begin with **Mass in Our Lady Chapel at 6:00 PM, and then move to the Center for Performing Arts for a light supper, and our evening of discussion, led by Fr. John**. We are requesting a **free will offering for the evening**. If you cannot make it for Mass or for dinner, you are still welcome to attend the evening of spiritual conversation — come when you are able! Mark the date on your calendars and give yourself a treat in the Lord! **Sign up on the retreat sheet located on the easel in the narthex of Our Lady Chapel or contact Patty in the Chapel Office (440) 473-3560 or szaniszlop@gilmour.org**



Men's Retreat

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For a young man grieving the loss of his brother & his brother’s girlfriend.
- 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 Ella Louise Jones, mother of Basketball Coach, Randolph Keller, grandmother of Christian [*12] and Alexandria [*14] Keller
- For Father Patrick Sullivan, C.S.C.
- For Mike Kiec
- For Joseph Crowe, father of Elizabeth [*06], Katie [*07], and Patrick [*08] Crowe.
- For Mary Wiehn, sister of Joe Raguso [*58], aunt of Maureen [*92] and Carolyn [*94] Raguso.
- For Madeleine Popp, mother of Gilmour CFO, Kathy Popp

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.

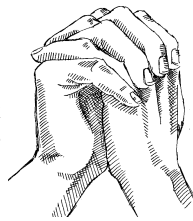
Total Offerings: Saturday [2/17/24] ----- \$ 410.00
Total Offerings: Sunday [2/18/24] ----- \$ 299.00

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 John Zippay, family friend of Bernadette and Stephen Ritley, who is critically ill.
- 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 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 Josephine Fernando, mother of Melvin [‘83] and Raymond [‘88] Fernando, mother-in-law of Imelda Deogracias Fernando [‘88], who is ill.
- For Pam Spicer, wife of former Gilmour coach, Bob Spicer, who is under the care of hospice.
- For Richard DeBacco, father of Michelle Chiacchiarri [‘96], father-in-law of Mark Chiacchiarri [‘94], grandfather of Aurelia [‘28] and Olivia [‘30] Chiacchiarri, who is undergoing treatment for lymphoma
- For Marc Williams who is critically ill with ALS
- For Shobir Corraya, brother of Brother Victor Corraya, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for a brain hemorrhage.
- For Frances Meyers who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Michael Nestor [‘98], who is under the care of hospice.
- For Paul Serra, score keeper for Gilmour athletics, who is undergoing treatment for blood clots.
- For Janie Brooks, mother of Trustee, Sherri Beedles, grandmother of Alexander Beedles [‘22], who is ill.
- For Jean Ann Liott, who is undergoing treatment for heart issues.
- For Tom Ward, uncle-in-law of Housekeeping associate, Natasha, who is undergoing treatment and surgery for a serious infection.
- For Debbie Langer, friend of Cindy Frimel, who was diagnosed with brain cancer.
- For Denise Mardano, who is battling liver cancer.
- For Sheila Fitzpatrick, who is experiencing difficulties in battling cancer.
- For Terry, a young man with an unknown wrist joint disease.
- For John Lennon, [‘55], father of John [‘78] and James [‘80] Lennon, grandfather of Jimmy [‘30], Casey [‘30], Katelyn [‘32], who is under the care of hospice.

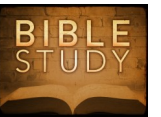


PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas.
- For an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine.
- For an elderly couple who are grieving the loss of their grandchild.

NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be this Wednesday, February 28th 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: Lenten Penance

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, February 25: 2 nd Week in Lent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, February 26:	NO MASS
Tuesday, February 27:	NO MASS
Wednesday, February 28:	NO MASS
Thursday, February 29:	NO MASS
Friday, March 1:	NO MASS
Saturday, March 2: 3 rd Week in Lent	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, March 3: 3 rd Week in Lent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — MARCH 16th:

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:

I often find myself saying this or that scripture reading is one of my favorite passages. Well, this one certainly deserves to be in the top ten — The Transfiguration [Mark 9:2-10]. There is so much food for thought that every time you look at it you see different things.

Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus. We know that they refer to the law and the prophets and that their presence indicates that Jesus has come to fulfil all that they hoped for. Moses led his people into the Promised Land, but he never got there himself. But now he is there. And in what company! With Elijah — the greatest of Israel’s prophets — and with Jesus the long-awaited Messiah. We tend to think of the presence of Moses and Elijah as confirming who Jesus was; demonstrating to the apostles that Jesus is the one to whom Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, pointed to.

But looking at it another way, just think how Moses and Elijah must have felt being there on the mountain with Jesus in that moment of special communion with the Father. This was the moment for which their whole lives and all the mighty works that they performed was but a preparation. What satisfaction they must have experienced.

And the story of Abraham’s faith brings that other crucial figure from the Old Testament into the picture [Genesis 22:1-18]. And we have that marvelous story of the sacrifice of Isaac — or rather the non-sacrifice of Isaac.

One can hardly imagine what went through Abraham’s mind when God told him to take Isaac to the mountain and offer him there as a burnt offering. This child who was so long awaited and whose birth itself was a complete miracle suddenly picked out to die by this hard taskmaster of a God.

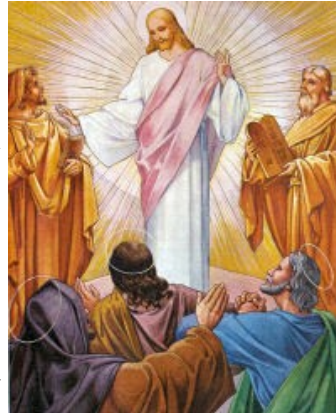
But Isaac does not die. He is a prefigure of Christ — God’s only Son — who was even more long awaited and who is also sacrificed on the mountain of Calvary. But he, too, is spared from the power of death and rises again to bring salvation to the whole human race.

By presenting these three great patriarchs from the Old Testament the liturgy shows us the wonderful continuity that exists between the Church and the People of Israel. Like them we journey to the promised land. Like them we have our own patriarchs. Just for recent examples look at John XXIII, Paul VI, Pope John Paul II, and now Pope Francis — tremendous leaders, frequently misunderstood, but universally acknowledged as wise old men who have done their level best to discern the will of God for his people. They are our modern-day patriarchs. And in the Church of the New Testament we have our matriarchs too like Mother Teresa, Edith Stein and Therese of Lisieux who also show us the way God wants us to live our lives in the world of today.

This moment of transfiguration or theophany is a marvelous mystery. In the most traditional interpretation Jesus is assured of the Father’s love before he undergoes his passion and death. And this is perfectly valid. Jesus was both fully human and fully divine and in his humanity surely needed encouragement and the assurance of the Father’s love just as we ourselves would have needed it.

But the Transfiguration was also for the apostles; and through them therefore also for us. In the Transfiguration the assurance is given that the Father and the Son are one and that all that is to come — the passion and death of Jesus — is part of God’s plan for our salvation.

The apostles saw the glory of the Lord; it was too great for them to even begin to appreciate and they burble nonsense about pitching tents. They want to be doing something instead of simply being, simply resting, basking in the glory of the Lord.

**SEEING THE REAL JESUS:**

On the Second Sunday in Lent, we always read a Gospel account of the Transfiguration. It reminds us that we only see a tiny part of the mystery of Jesus — or, for that matter, the mystery of another human being.

To illustrate this, I would like to share a story told by Dr. Peggy Hartshorn, president of Heartbeat International — a dramatic story about a woman who saw the mystery of her unborn child: The pregnancy was unplanned and the woman wanted to end it, but she agreed to an ultra-sound. She saw on the screen the outline of her baby — a perfectly formed body with tiny arms and legs. Dr. Hartshorn said that 75% of women see an ultra-sound decide to keep their baby — but 25% do not. It seemed like the woman would be in that 25% because she kept saying: “No, no, I cannot have the baby.”

All of a sudden, the assistant said: “Reach out and take your baby’s hand.” Dr. Hartshorn was annoyed at her assistant for saying something so strange. But the woman extended her hand toward the monitor. As if by a divine cue, the baby moved his arm. On the screen his tiny hand touched its mom’s fingers. She kept her baby.

That woman glimpsed the mystery of her unborn child. There is a mystery inside each one of us — the mystery of the image of God. How beautiful it is when we glimpse the divine reflection in another person. Maybe we had looked at that other as an inconvenience — even a nuisance. But then God showed us something marvelous about the other.

We certainly see that in Mark’s Gospel [9:2-10]. Jesus was taking the apostles to Jerusalem, where he would become an object of shame they would run away from. On the way, however, he led them up a high mountain and, as St. Mark says: “he was transfigured before them and his clothes became dazzling white.” They saw a glimpse — a tiny glimpse — of who Jesus was. That would sustain them through some dark moments.

Now, God can reveal himself instantly as with the Transfiguration of Jesus — or the ultrasound of that tiny baby. But we need to prepare our hearts. Jesus had spent long months teaching and conversing with the disciples — especially Peter, James and John. Only then did he give them this glimpse of his inner reality. Likewise, we need time with Jesus — by praying and studying his Word - to open ourselves to who He is.

Set aside time to pray and study God’s word. Open your heart to God. He can give a glimpse of the mystery of Jesus — and the human person. Like Peter, we will say: “It is good that we are here!”

—taken from the writings of Father Phil Bloom., which appear on the internet

**NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:**

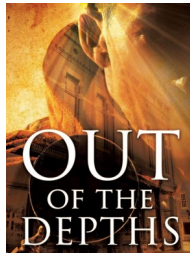
Blessed Basile Moreau was the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, to which Fr. John and the Brothers at Gilmour belong. We have two booklets with Novenas to Blessed Basile Moreau. One is used for a personal intention or healing; the other is used when praying for the intention or healing of someone other than yourself. The Novenas were composed by Father Thomas Looney, C.S.C. Many have received blessings and healings through the intercession of Blessed Basile Moreau, and now we want to extend this invitation to you and your family. Please see Father John and he will be glad to give you the booklets.



CRYING OUT TO THE LORD:

The only time I have truly felt myself to be in peril on the sea was years ago when, on a solo outing in the family Sunfish off the beach, I capsized. As the sail filled with water and the waves billowed alarmingly around me, I tried and failed repeatedly to right the boat. In those moments I experienced panic, adrenaline, fear, and desperation — probably much like the feelings that our psalmist who wrote Psalm 130 must have felt when he/she wrote: “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord” [Psalm 130:1-2]. One need not have been physically engulfed by billows to know what it feels like to be drowning — particularly this year. We may be submerged by pandemic-driven needs of those we love, or flooded by extra financial worries, or immersed in anxiety about the future — in addition to whatever existing burdens we have been shouldering. As we feel ourselves going under — and because of our human pride, often not until we are about to go under — we cry out for the strong hand of God, acknowledging that he alone can save us. Perhaps the gift of rough seas is that they force us to acknowledge our utter dependence on the One who loves us. As Saint Augustine observes in his exposition of Psalm 130: “For this mortal life is our deep. Whoever has understood himself to be in the deep, cries out, groans, sighs, until he be delivered from the deep, and come unto Him who sits above all the deeps.”

—taken from the writings of Betsy Cahill, which appear on the internet

**THE TRUE VOICE OF LOVE:**

Fear is the great enemy of intimacy. Fear makes us run away from each other or cling to each other, but does not create true intimacy. When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, the disciples were overcome by fear and they all “deserted him and ran away” [see Matthew 26:56]. Fear makes us move away from each other to a “safe” distance, or move toward each other to a “safe” closeness, but fear does not create the space where true intimacy can exist.

To those who are tortured by inner or outer fear, and who desperately look for the house of love where they can find the intimacy their hearts desire, Jesus says: “You have a home — I am your home; claim me as your home; you will find it to be the intimate place where I have found my home; it is right where you are — in your innermost being — in your heart.” The more attentive we are to such words, the more we realize that we do not have to go far to find what we are searching for. The tragedy is that we are so possessed by fear that we do not trust our innermost self as an intimate place but anxiously wander around hoping to find it where we are not. We try to find that intimate place in knowledge, competence, notoriety, success, friends, sensations, pleasure, dreams, or artificially induced states of consciousness. Thus we become strangers to ourselves, people who have an address but are never home, and hence cannot be addressed by the true voice of love.

—Henri Nouwen

THINK ABOUT THIS:

Tear doubt out of your heart! Never allow doubt to hinder you from praying to God by perchance thinking to yourself: “How can I ask anything from the Lord, how can I receive anything from him since I have sinned so much against him?” Never think like this! Instead, turn to the Lord with your whole heart. Pray to him without wavering and you will come to know his great mercy. He will never desert you. He will fulfill your heart’s request because God is not like people, who harbor grudges. No, he does not remember evil, and he has compassion for what he has made.

—Hermas

Some important writers speak about the Transfiguration when explaining the stages in the spiritual life. There are periods of great activity in our prayer life — especially at the beginning when we go around praying for everyone and everything. I suppose we could compare this to Christ’s public ministry.

But then comes a moment or moments of transfiguration. Special moments when we sit down to pray and no words come but we are overcome with a powerful feeling that God loves us. It might not last long — and we frequently can’t explain it to others — but it was sheer bliss while it lasted. The spiritual writers compare this to Christ’s Transfiguration.

But don’t be deluded that this will last forever, because then comes a period of desolation — a period when God seems very far away. It is as if having shown us the depths of his love he withdraws and leaves us on our own for a while. Sometimes this lasts a very long time indeed and our faith is sorely tested.

The spiritual writers sometimes call this the dark night of the soul. We can compare it to Christ’s passion. The best way to look at it is as a period of growth in the darkness. If you’ll excuse the analogy, it is like a small shoot covered in manure; it is seemingly wiped out, but all the while the roots are being deeply nourished, and in due time it will burst forth as a remarkably strong and vigorous plant.

These are just some of the phases of the spiritual life that are important to know about. Maybe they make sense to you, maybe they don’t; if so don’t worry. Perhaps it is too soon to know how they apply to us; often we can only tell with long hindsight. Frequently we go through these phases in our youth and then go through them all over again, but in a much deeper and more mysterious way in our adult lives.

The Transfiguration is a deep mystery and a worthy subject for our meditation. Just take for example even out of context those words when the vision went away — “Suddenly when they looked round, they saw no one with them anymore — only Jesus.” If we could see only Jesus what would our lives be like? They would be transformed beyond recognition.

If in all those around us we could see Jesus we would be beginning to see the world as it really is. We would be seeing the hidden world of the Kingdom, which is a truer version of reality than anything that we can perceive with our senses.

Dig deep into the Gospels, look below the surface, meditate on the words of Jesus — see his words as addressed personally to you. Then scripture will become what it is — the living Word of God. A book filed with spiritual insights — a love letter from the King of Heaven personally addressed to you.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

We list the Scripture readings for the week, with the hope that you will take some time in your busy day to reflect on God’s word in your homes. We hope you can make good use of it.

Monday: Daniel 9:4b-10, Luke 6:36-38

Tuesday: Isaiah 1:10, 16-20, Matthew 23:1-12

Wednesday: Jeremiah 18:18-20, Matthew 20:17-28

Thursday: Jeremiah 17:5-10, Luke 16:19-31

Friday: Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

Saturday: Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

3rd Week in Lent: Exodus 20:1-17, 1 Corinthians 1:22-25, John 2:13-25

BECOMING A BETTER LISTENER:

In Mark's portrayal of the Transfiguration [Mark 9:2-10], Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a high mountain where he is transfigured before them. Moses, representing the Law, and Elijah, representing the Prophets, appear conversing with Jesus. A cloud comes, casting a shadow over the terrified disciples, and from the cloud comes a voice — "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."

We can interpret that voice as God speaking to us today, commanding us to listen to Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. None of us fulfill this command to listen to Christ perfectly. We are all deficient, limited hearers of the Word. We may listen to him in some situations and not in others. We know the temptation to let distorted cultural messages override the teachings of Christ. It is possible to turn the journey of life into a frenzied rat race, constantly distracted by static that drowns out the voice of the Lord. Some of us recognize the common tendency to accept the comforting message of Christ and to tune out his challenging words.

We can imagine persons who respond to Mark's Gospel by becoming better listeners to Christ. A young woman, waiting for a clear, direct message from the Lord to guide her choice of life vocation, comes to see that Christ may be speaking to her in more subtle ways — for example, through prayerful reflection on her personal interests, her gifts and talents, on what she finds meaningful and fulfilling, and on ways she could help make the world a better place. A man who is very attuned to hearing Christ speak to him through his loving wife and three children, making his family life a true source of joy and spiritual growth, begins for the first time to apply Christ's message to his demanding job. A married woman who meets regularly with a small group of like-minded women friends to discuss spiritual matters recognizes that she has excluded her husband from her spiritual search and decides to try to hear Christ speaking through him. A lifelong Catholic who usually sleepwalks through most of Mass until his intimate conversation with Christ after communion starts paying more attention to the Liturgy of the Word — often hearing a word from the Lord that applies to his everyday life.

How could you become a better hearer of the Word — more attentive to the voice of Christ, more responsive to his message?

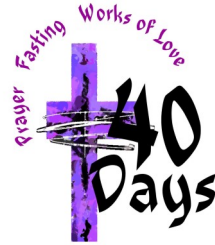
—taken from the writings of Father Jim Bacik which appear on the internet

WOMEN'S EVENING OF RETREAT — SAVE THE DATE:

Tuesday, May 7th from 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM will be our annual Women's Spring Retreat. All women of Our Lady Chapel and Gilmour Academy, and their guests, are welcome. We will begin with Mass together in the Chapel at 6:00, and then move to the Center for Performing Arts, for a light supper and our evening of reflection, led by Fr. John. **We are requesting a free will offering for the evening.** If you cannot make it for Mass or even for the dinner, you are still welcome to attend the evening of spiritual reflection. We are requesting a free will offering for the evening. **So mark the date on your calendars** and give yourself a treat in the Lord!

**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].

**LOOK BEYOND:**

Throughout my life, the story of God asking Abraham to sacrifice his son [Genesis 22:1-18] would stop me cold. Why would a loving God want to put Abraham to a test? I have always thought of God as a benevolent parent. And just as I could not imagine my parents ever testing me to prove my love for them, I could not understand why would God test me. Then when I became a parent, I could not imagine a test that would require my being prepared to sacrifice one of my children — that test seemed one I would certainly fail. Yet at the same time I knew I had much to learn from this reading.

The Scripture readings for this 2nd Week in Lent are not about my willingness to sacrifice a child; rather they are about my willingness to explore what is distracting me from God's love. What God is asking each of us today is: "how can I turn away from what leads me away from God?" What am I clinging to in my life that is getting in the way of my relationship with God?

This Second Week in Lent has two mind-boggling images for us to ponder. First, we are asked to picture Abraham with a knife in his hand poised to "hand over" his only and beloved son. What is this story really about? It is about the fact that faith has consequences. The consequences for Abraham were the promises of fruitfulness which extended to vast lands and abundant descendants. For the faithful Jews, there was the always-present need to hear of God's saving actions. The Pentateuch — of which Genesis is the first book — is an inspired history and constant reminder of how, while they are called to listen and obey, God will always save them from their enemies and themselves.

The Mark's story of the Transfiguration of Jesus, is also a story about the consequences of faith. Faith takes us beyond the surface — to see beyond what we see in order to come face to face with the image and likeness of God that we carry within us.

As the mystery of God's redemptive love unfolds in the image of Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah, Peter responds: "It is good to be here" [Mark 9:2-10]. Recall that the next time the three chosen apostles are alone with Jesus on a hill and in the garden of Jesus' agony, it will not seem good for them to be present.

There is within us all, what is known as an "approach/avoidance" tension. We are attracted to things at times and avoid those same things at other times. We can be attracted to those things we know also are unhealthy for us. Moths, for example, approach flame which they should avoid.

We are attracted to and avoid mystery. We want to know reasons for and outcomes of the events of our lives — especially those which boggle our faculties of mind and imagination. Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Jesus and eventually the Apostles stayed faithful to their calls. But it wasn't easy. What does this "rising from the dead" mean? The apostles stayed at least faithful enough and present to it all, in order to find out.

I pray to God to help me be willing to sacrifice my distractions. Help me to live a good life, but not to cling to the security of that life at all cost. Help me to be generous with my love and attention to others and not to cling to fulfilling my own needs first. Help me to bring joy to others, but not cling to a need to be the center of other's attention.

We are invited during these days of Lent to be freed from closing the book of our mysteries and to stay open and present to see what God is not taking away, but offering. And remember: "If God is for us, who can be against?" [Romans 8:31-37].

—taken from the writings of Mary Lee Brock, which appear on the internet

