

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer for Easter ~

Yours be the glory,
Jesus, Holy One,
Risen up in triumph,
splendid as the sun.
To anoint your body,
grieving women came
And with joy departed,
hast'ning to proclaim:
Yours be the glory,
Mary's only Son,
Risen up in triumph,
Jesus, Holy One!

Radiant you meet us,
risen from the tomb,
Lovingly you greet us,
scatter fear and gloom.
Let your Church with gladness
hymns of triumph sing;
You live now among us;
death has lost its sting.
Radiant you meet us,
gracious as a groom;
Lovingly you greet us,
risen from the tomb.

Yours be the glory,
never-setting sun,
Star yet brightly burning
when life's day is done!
Dawn breaks forth from darkness,
overcoming night.
Star of Morning glorious,
flood our world with light!
Yours be the glory,
God's beloved Son,
Star forever burning,
never-setting sun!
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.

THE EASTER SEASON BEGINS:

In the midst of the early dark of night a fire begins to flicker outside the church. An Easter Candle, boldly marked with the symbols of the current year and of Christ's divinity and glorious suffering, is lit from the new fire. It is carried prominently into the midst of the people. There it is heralded with joyful song: *Light of Christ — Come, let us adore him*. From this one light, the candles of hundreds of assembled believers are lit until the church is ablaze with new light. A cantor sings an ancient and beautiful song [*Exultet*, "Rejoice"] before the Easter Candle. Powerful Scripture readings about water and new creation are proclaimed. Easter water is blessed with the singing of the Litany of Saints and with sacred oils consecrated just days before. Catechumens step forward, speak their baptismal vows with the supportive voices of the congregation around them, and are baptized. Bells ring out. Flowers — especially Easter lilies — and joyful banners decorate the sanctuary. Alleluias are sung for the first time in six weeks. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! No other moment of the church year is as rich in powerful and early symbolism as the Easter Vigil. It is the night of all nights. It is the heart of Christianity. It is Easter.

**WELCOME and CONGRATULATIONS:**

Easter is the time to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation in the Church. Here at Our Lady Chapel, we were blessed to celebrate these sacraments — Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist — with **Joseph Sabik** ['15]. God bless, Joseph. You have given us an enthusiasm for faith that is inspiring. We have been blessed to journey with you and look forward to many years together in Christ.

**ALLELUIA! JESUS IS RISEN!**

This is the greeting that we proclaim today, and the song that we joyfully sing. However, the first Easter did not begin as a joyous day. Peter and the ten remaining apostles were hiding in the upper room, both grieving the death of Jesus, and fearful of what might happen to them. Mary of Magdala goes to the tomb early in the morning to perform the burial rituals that could not be done earlier because of the Passover. She is not going there to see the Risen Lord — she is going to anoint a dead man who changed her life. She arrives at the tomb and discovers that the stone was removed and the tomb was empty.



This is not a moment of: "yes, He did it," but one of deeper grief as she runs to the upper room to tell Peter that someone took the body from the tomb. Only further reflection by Peter and John — after they had run to the tomb — turned their mourning into joy.

During the Easter Season we will hear the Gospel accounts of the Risen Lord and how the news of His Resurrection spread. It serves as a time for us to celebrate this great event. It is the act of God's love that freed us from sin and opened for us the way to the glory and joy of eternal life in Heaven. This is a season for us to celebrate — not just the historical event of two thousand years ago — but also the reality that this event is timeless.

The Risen Lord still touches and changes the hearts of men and women. One way to see this is by noting the number of people in the RCIA who entered the church at the Easter Vigil. His presence continues to draw others to know him personally, and is the call for us to lift up our hearts and souls with renewed faith and joy. Like Mary Magdala, we are the apostles of our own time who are called to run with joy to proclaim to others that Jesus is Risen.

—taken from the writings of Father Killian Loch, O.S.B., which appear on the internet

FAITH EDUCATION — RESUMES NEXT SUNDAY MORNING:

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: April 7-14-21-28.**

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For our Muslim brothers and sisters during this time of Ramadan
- 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 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 Jocelyn Juilien Hondlik ['85], wife of Chris Hondlik ['84], mother of Ryan ['20] and Lauren ['22] Hondlik.
- For Father Donald Dilg, C.S.C.
- For Mardee Gallagher, mother of Brigid Gallagher ['99]
- For Glenn Darling, father of Kimberly Darling ['74] and Makenzie Darling ['99]
- For Craig Andrews
- For Katie Downie-Gombach, former Gilmour teacher.
- For Charles Rohr ['54] and Thomas Rohr ['57]
- For Karen O'Hara, mother of Tom ['80] and Kathy ['89] O'Hara, and Chrissy ['90] O'Hara. Hynes
- For Sister Mary Ann Tusai, S.N.D.

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.

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.

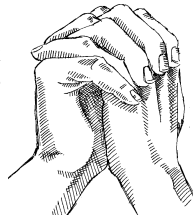


PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- 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.
- 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 Chiacchiari ['96], father-in-law of Mark Chiacchiari ['94], grandfather of Aurelia ['28] and Olivia ['30] Chiacchiari, 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 Janie Brooks, mother of Trustee, Sherri Beedles, grandmother of Alexander Beedles ['22], who is ill.
- 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 undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Joseph Michael, father of former Gilmour LS religion teacher, Colleen Michael, who is undergoing treatment for ALS.
- For Father Ken Molinaro, C.S.C., who is under the care of hospice.
- For Ursula Wyras, mother of Janet Heryak, grandmother of Lillian ['09], Rosa ['12] and Edwin ['17] Heryak, who is undergoing medical treatment
- For Rosalie Massey, Middle School Associate, who is recovering from Knee Replacement Surgery
- For Loretta Peterson, mother of Christopher ['69], Mark ['70] and Guy ['73] Peterson, who is ill.
- For Sister Colette Livingston, O.S.U., who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Nada Kucmanic, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.



EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS:

We are currently discerning a new group of Eucharistic Ministers who would undergo training within the next month. If you feel that the Lord is calling you to this ministry, we would be delighted to include you in that ministry here at Our Lady Chapel. Both adults and teens [must be a Senior in High School] are welcome to participate in this very special ministry. We are in need of ministers for both our Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses. **Contact Father John or the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you feel called to this ministry.** We are always in need of Eucharistic Ministers.



NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, April 10th 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: The Easter Appearances of Jesus and the Call to New Life

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, April 1: Easter Sunday	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, April 2:	NO MASS
Tuesday, April 3:	NO MASS
Wednesday, April 4:	NO MASS
Thursday, April 5:	NO MASS
Friday, April 6:	NO MASS
Saturday, April 7: 2nd Week in Easter	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, April 8: 2nd Week in Easter	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

EASTER FLOWERS:

Thanks to all who have assisted us with our Easter Flowers during this Resurrection Season. Following Easter, the flowers will be planted outside in areas surrounding the chapel. As we celebrate together the new life of Easter, we share also in the renewing of the world of nature. We would like to remember: **Thomas Hughes, Sue Ryavec, and Members of the Blazek and Rezabek Families.** Please say a prayer for our loved ones and for their families. **If you would like to add your loved ones to this list of remembrances, please turn in your list of names to Father John, or drop your envelop in the baskets at the doors of the chapel.** We will publish this list throughout the Easter Season.



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].



ANOINTING OF THE SICK:

At all our Masses on the weekend, April 27-28, we will be celebrating the **Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick**. Illness and suffering have always been part of human life. In illness, we experience our powerlessness, our limitations, and our mortality. Every illness can make us glimpse death. Illness can lead to anguish, self-absorption — sometimes even despair and anger against God. It can also make us more mature — helping us discern in our lives what is not essential so that we can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to Him.

The Church believes and confesses that among the seven sacraments, there is one very special sacrament which is intended to strengthen those who are being tried by illness. The **Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick** was instituted by Christ our Lord as a true and proper sacrament of the New Testament. It is alluded to by Mark in his gospel, but is recommended to the faithful and more fully explained in the letter of James the Apostle [James 5:14-15].

Most of us remember the time when the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick was conferred exclusively on those who were at the point of death; it's very name — "Extreme Unction" [Last Anointing] reminded us of this practice. But it is clear from the scriptures that this was never the intent of the sacrament. The early Church had an entirely different approach to this sacrament; the Vatican council restored this approach and returned the sacrament to its original name. Today, this beautiful sacrament allows us a special encounter with God during those times of illness in our lives. The cross always leads to the resurrection; sickness leads to salvation.

When are the times when we can receive this sacrament? There are many occasions — during any serious illness; before surgery; the elderly; mental and emotional illness; spiritual struggle; approaching death. Who determines when an illness is serious? You do! Whenever you feel you need the sacrament you should receive it. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has been the vehicle of many powerful encounters with God in the lives of people. **If you have or know of friends or relatives who should receive this sacrament, please try to arrange for them to be here. If there is a problem with local transportation, please let us know.** Join us for this special occasion.

**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**

**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 the Gilmour Academy Women'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**

**EASTER IS AN EXPERIENCE:**

As we celebrate Easter, it is more important to reflect on our own death and resurrection than on the death and resurrection of the historical Jesus. For if we haven't personally died and risen, there's no reason to celebrate Easter. The Scriptures make sense only when we listen to them through the filter of our own experiences. The entire celebration of Easter revolves around Paul's reminder to the Church at Rome: "We who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" [Romans 6:3-11].

When Paul originally wrote these words, he didn't envision baptism as just pouring a few drops of water over someone's forehead. Baptism in his day was administered by immersion. Catechumens were totally dunked under the water, then raised up — an outward sign of dying, being buried, and rising with Jesus. As with all sacraments, what happens outside symbolizes what's happening inside.

The key is that, like Jesus, one must really be dead before one can rise. As John's Jesus states: "Only when the grain of wheat dies will it produce fruit" [see John 12:24]. That's why the women are at the tomb. They saw Jesus die. Had they not initially experienced his death, they wouldn't have been the first to experience his resurrection [Mark 16:1-7].

They'll eventually understand that they were not dealing with a resuscitation. The historical Jesus doesn't simply start breathing again. When Paul experienced the "Christ" on the Damascus road, he experienced a whole "new creation" — no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. As he later told his community in Galatia, he'd never before experienced anyone quite like him [see Galatians 1:14-17].

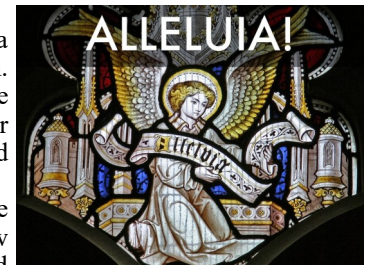
The essential thing about Jesus' followers is that those who, like him, die by giving themselves to those around them also rise into new creations. That's why, as we learned in catechism class, no one should confess sins they've committed before baptism. It isn't just that baptism washed away those sins — a different person committed those sins, a person who died.

Just as the ancient Israelites became a new people by crossing through the sea during the Exodus, so we became a new people when we were submerged in the waters of baptism. A group of runaway slaves became the Chosen People when they stepped into the sea; we became other Christs when we stepped into our baptismal water.

We who've imitated Jesus' death and resurrection know what it's like to actually have a deep thirst quenched — a thirst many of us didn't even notice until this Galilean carpenter became part of our lives. Because of his presence, we daily experience someone who simultaneously is so near to us that we can't imagine how we existed before, yet who is also as far away from us as the heavens are above the earth. Part of our dying/rising is a commitment to live our lives in the midst of such contradictions.

We have no choice but to constantly fall back on God's word in our life. Isaiah was convinced that as soon as God says something, it happens [Isaiah 55:1-11]. This night of all nights is the best occasion to surface what the risen Jesus is saying in my life. If we don't know, we simply haven't been listening.

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

**THE RIDDLE OF NATURE:**

To read the book of nature, you have to actually pay attention — go out and fill your gaze with the stars, or a forest, or a deer. Without this practice, the book is illegible, and it is difficult to make sense of the psalmist's claim that the "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." Similarly, it will be hard to follow the apostle Paul's argument that "what can be known about God is plain to [human beings], because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes — namely, his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made." What can nature tell us about how to live within it?

—Peter Mommsen

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS BRINGS FORTH FORGIVENESS:

Forgiveness is the only thing that is new — and it is the message of the resurrection. The world contains only one thing that is truly novel — forgiveness. Everything else is an old tape repeating itself endlessly over and over again. There is normally only one song that gets sung — betrayal-hurt-resentment-non-forgiveness. That pattern never changes. There is an unbroken chain of unforgiven resentment and anger stretching back to Adam and Eve.

We are all part of that chain. Everyone is wounded and everyone wounds. Everyone sins and everyone is sinned against. Everyone needs to forgive, and everyone needs to be forgiven.

Betrayal is an archetypal structure within the human soul, just as sin is innate within the human condition. We — all of us — betray and sin. We betray ourselves, betray our loved ones, betray our communities, and sin against our God. Everyone stands in need of forgiveness.

Each one of us has been betrayed and sinned against. We are betrayed by our loved ones, by our churches, by our communities, and, in a manner of speaking, even by our God. It is not for nothing that, on the cross, Jesus, incarnating there all that is human, cries out: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” We all feel betrayed at that deep level sometimes. Hence, as badly as we need to be forgiven, we also need to forgive.

We have hurt others, and we have been hurt. We have sinned, and we have been sinned against. And when we wake up to that, we have a choice — like Judas we can cleanse ourselves of this, figuratively speaking, by taking what we have gained by our sin, the thirty pieces of silver, and throwing it back into the temple and walking away, purified, but unforgiven, walking straight towards suicide. Conversely, though, we can do like Peter, after his great betrayal, weep bitterly and then return, humbled, compromised and scarred, but forgiven, walking solidly into life. In forgiveness lies the difference between the choice for suicide and the choice for life.

But forgiveness is not easy. An old adage says: To err is human, to forgive is divine. More accurately, one might put it this way: To forgive is the grace that is given by the resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus has many dimensions. At one level, it was a physical event. The dead body of Jesus was raised, the cosmic universe at its deepest level suddenly had a new set of laws, and the very atoms of this universe, as nature first arranged them, were re-arranged. Something radically new — physically new — as radical and new as the original creation, appeared within history. This aspect should never be, as it recently has been, understated.

However the resurrection was also a spiritual event — and that too is important. In the resurrection of Jesus we are given not just the potential for a resurrected body and a resurrected cosmos, we are given as well the possibility of forgiveness — of being forgiven and of forgiving each other. That new possibility and its radical novelty should also never be understated. From the beginning of time until Jesus’ resurrection, dead bodies stayed dead. And from Adam and Eve until that same resurrection, wounded and dead hearts stayed wounded and dead. All that has now changed. There are new possibilities.

What is new in the resurrection is not just the unbelievable new possibility of physical resurrection. The resurrection gives us to the equally unbelievable possibility of the newness of life that forgiving and being forgiven brings. In our day to day lives that is how we are asked to appropriate the resurrection of Jesus — by forgiving and by letting ourselves be forgiven.

In Mark’s account of the death and resurrection of Jesus, our human condition is symbolized by a young man who was following Jesus’ journey to the cross from a safe distance. At a certain point this young man, who is wearing only a white linen cloth, is seized. He escapes his captors and flees naked — leaving the cloth behind [see Mark 14:1—15:47]. That betrayal is yours and mine. But we next meet him on Easter Sunday, sitting on the tomb of the resurrected Jesus, wearing again his linen cloth and announcing to the whole world that Jesus has been raised, that an unbelievable newness has burst into our world, and that there is something even beyond our wounds, sins, and betrayals [see Mark 16:1-8]. The chain of anger has been broken.

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



EASTER MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS TO CATHOLICS IN THE HOLY LAND:

Dear brothers and sisters,

For some time, you have daily been in my thoughts and prayers. Now, on the eve of this Easter that for you is so overshadowed by the Passion, but as yet, so little by the Resurrection, I feel the desire to write to you and to tell you how close you are to my heart. I embrace all of you, in the variety of your rites, dear Catholic faithful living throughout the Holy Land. In a particular way, I embrace those most affected by the senseless tragedy of war — the children robbed of their future, those who grieve and are in pain, and all who find themselves prey to anguish and dismay.

Easter, the heart of our faith, is all the more significant for you who celebrate this feast in the very places where our Lord lived, died, and rose again. The history of salvation, and indeed its geography, would not exist apart from the land in which you have dwelt for centuries. There you want to remain, and there it is good that you should remain. Thank you for your testimony of faith; thank you for the charity that exists among you; thank you for your ability to hope against all hope.

I would like each of you to feel my paternal affection, for I am conscious of your sufferings and your struggles — particularly in the course of these recent months. Together with my affection, may you sense the love of Catholics throughout the world! May the Lord Jesus, our Life, like the Good Samaritan, pour over your wounds in body and soul the balm of his consolation and the wine of hope.

I think back on the pilgrimage I made among you ten years ago, and I would like to make my own the words that, fifty years ago, Saint Paul VI — the first Successor of Peter to travel as a pilgrim to the Holy Land — addressed to the faithful everywhere: “The continuing tensions in the Middle East, and the lack of concrete progress towards peace, represent a constant and dire threat not only to the peace and security of those peoples — and indeed of the entire world — but also to values supremely dear, for different reasons, to much of mankind”.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Christian community of the Holy Land has not only acted down the centuries as a guardian of the places of our salvation, but has likewise borne enduring witness, through its own sufferings, to the mystery of the Lord’s Passion. By your ability to rise anew and press forward, you have proclaimed, and continue to proclaim, that the crucified Lord rose from the dead; bearing the marks of his Passion, he then appeared to his disciples and ascended to heaven to bring before the Father our tormented yet now redeemed humanity. In these bleak times, when it seems that the dark clouds of Good Friday hover over your land, and all too many parts of our world are scarred by the pointless folly of war — which is always and for everyone a bitter defeat — you are lamps shining in the night, seeds of goodness in a land rent asunder by conflict.

For you and with you, I lift up this prayer: “Lord, you are our peace [see Ephesians 2:14-22]. You who proclaimed blessed the peacemakers [see Matthew 5:9]: set human hearts free from hatred, violence and the spirit of revenge. We look to your example, and we follow you, who are merciful, meek, and humble of heart [see Matthew 11:29]. May no one rob our hearts of the hope of rising anew with you. May we never tire of defending the dignity of every man, woman, and child, without distinction of religion, ethnicity, or nationality, beginning with the most vulnerable among us: women, the elderly, children and the poor”.

Dear brothers and sisters, allow me to tell you once more that you are not alone; we will never leave you alone, but will demonstrate our solidarity with you by prayer and practical charity. Soon we hope to return among you as pilgrims, to draw near to you, to embrace you, to break with you the bread of fraternity and to contemplate the tender shoots of hope that spring from the seeds you are sowing in pain and nurturing with patience.

—Francis

REFLECTION FOR THE WEEK:

We rejoice on this Easter Day because human life has meaning. Suffering, too, has meaning — mystery, sense of loss, conflict, doubts, betrayals, physical ills, and the pain of growth. In the midst of pain, Easter joy brings victory; we realize the apparently impossible reality that Jesus who died has arisen from the dead to find comfort and give meaning to his friends.

Easter grace is extended to this world in the midst of its wars and divisions. This grace gives a clarity of vision to those of us who find seeing the presence of Jesus difficult at times — or always. Jesus rose from the darkness of the tomb to “untomb” us from our darkness. We must allow this grace to enlighten our heart and mind, and lighten the burdens of being individual humans. We have been found in the midst of our unpretending truth.

While it was dark, the Gospel reminds us, Mary of Magdala went to the place where Jesus had been buried [John 20:1-9]. The stone was rolled back. It was dark, remember. She returned to tell Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved. The two of them ran to find out where “they” had taken Him.

Here begins a theme of slowness to perceive and come to believe. Peter is slow to arrive and in many of the Resurrection narratives, there will be this slowness to recognize His presence and the fact that He has arisen. When these two finally go into the tomb, they see the sign and believe, even though they failed as of then, to see it all as the Scriptures had predicted.

This Easter morning there will be Sunrise Services in various places. If conditions are right, the sun will be seen peeking over the margin of the earth’s surface and there will be a cheer and excitement as if it had been in doubt. Slowly the sun centimeters its climb and begins doing good work of healing the earth of its darkness. That is Easter in a sense, but it happens every day — at least for a long time.

We are of the slow earth and our coming to life takes time. Jesus rose once and for all days and all the earth and for all its peoples.

The warmth and light of Jesus insists, like the sun, that we wake up, pick up on life and flower forth His beauty. There is much of electricity, excitement and praising of the Lord Jesus Who was raised from the deadly earth to walk again bringing others out and up and beyond. There is much Easter Joy, but is it only that Jesus rose.

There is a slowness in us; we are not risen, nor awake to our being the disciples whom Jesus loved then and loves now. There are our earthly roots and our historical leaves covering our growabilities. Where is the joy for us who are not yet totally warmed by His light?

The Son also rises for us; His insistence is a continuation of His faithfulness which moved Him towards and to His cross. Our joy is that He rose once and for us. He peeks over the margins of our earthliness more than on one early spring morning. Our Easter joy is not that we have to go and find Him. Our joy is that He rose to find us, to help us remove the leaves of deadly yesterdays and to bring His life into the acts of the disciples He loves.

For the next seven weeks, we will hear much of the struggles and growth of the early Christian community. The Acts of the Apostles — written, apparently, by the author of the Gospel of Luke — is a collection of events which form the fallout from the resurrection of Jesus. The little groups of believers move out from its birthplace of Jerusalem and begins the extension of Christ’s life-giving embrace to all creation and humankind. The Gospel of Luke portrays Jesus as moving ever so slowly up towards the heights of Jerusalem; the Book of Acts of the Apostles displays the Holy Spirit as dispensing God’s grace downward from Jerusalem to spread like “Good news” to the ends of the earth. Jesus’ Easter rising begins the movement by beginning God’s second creation of creation.

It is here that we find St. Peter speaking to the family and friends of Cornelius about this new life [Acts 10:34-43]. Cornelius is a devout and prayerful man — a centurion of the occupying Roman army



autumn turn brown, die and fall to the ground, leaving tree limbs bare until new buds burst forth and flower, greening Earth’s landscape once again. Also in the natural world eight living beings shed their skin in the growth and rebirth process — snakes, true crabs, frogs, dragonflies, geckos, spiders, cicadas and humans. Once a snake is free of its old skin, the snake’s colors become bright and vibrant. Some young spiders shed their skins so that their limbs can regenerate. The natural process that nonhuman life goes through is called ecdysis.

The Scripture Readings for Easter highlight three things that need to happen in the lives of Christians if Christians want to participate ever more deeply in the new life of the risen Christ whose divine spirit and power infuses the entire cosmos.

First, if we Christians wish to become an “Easter people,” then we have to clear out the old yeast in our lives [1 Corinthians 5:6-8]. In his letter to the Church at Corinth, Paul focuses on yeast and dough. In this letter, the Festival of Unleavened Bread celebrated at the time of Passover is linked to Easter and the resurrection of Christ. As part of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Jewish people had to remove all old leaven from their homes. Leavened bread contains yeast, a living, single-cell organism that, when mixed with dough, causes the dough to rise. Old or “expired” yeast, however, could cause illnesses and even keep the dough from rising. Thus, during the Festival of Unleavened Bread and Passover, the Jewish people were to eat only untainted, unleavened bread.

In calling us to get rid of the old, expired yeast in the fabric of our lives, we can become a new fresh batch of dough that, when baked, turns into unleavened bread. Thus, by clearing out the “old yeast” within us and by becoming a new batch of dough, we prepare ourselves to be changed into unleavened bread and essentially, to be transformed into Christ. The question to be explored is this: what in our lives is old and expired yeast that needs to be cleared out?

Second, if Christians wish to participate in Christ’s rising from the dead, then we have to shed — figuratively — our burial clothes. John’s Gospel tells the story of Mary of Magdala, Simon Peter, and a beloved disciple discovering that the body of the crucified, dead Jesus was no longer in the tomb where he was laid to rest. Instead, all they found there were Jesus’ burial clothes [John 20:1-9].

According to the Gospel story, as part of Christ’s rising from the dead, he shed his old burial clothes like the snake that shed its skin — both becoming bright and vibrant. Even though we are among the living, are we wearing burial clothes? What in our lives represents burial clothes? Have we dressed ourselves in these clothes or allowed others to dress us in them? Are we willing to shed these clothes to rise from the dead and become one with the living, wonder-full Christ or are we content to be part of the living dead spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, socially, intellectually? Easter invites us to put on vibrant new garments — essentially, to “put on Christ” [see Romans 6].

Third, if Christians wish to be an “Easter people,” sharing in the gift of new life while bearing witness to the resurrection of Christ, then just singing “alleluia” is not enough. Peter reminds us in his sermon to Cornelius that the Divine One anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Spirit and with power which, in turn, empowered Christ to embrace and live out his holy mission of preaching, teaching, healing and liberating all who were oppressed [see Acts 10:34-43].

We, too, who walk in the tradition of the apostles, are baptized into Christ. We have been anointed with the Spirit, and we have the same mission as Christ and the apostles. To be an Easter people means to do the work of Easter — to confront and work against hegemonic, systemic, and structural injustices while creating alternatives, to shake up the status quo, to welcome the marginalized, to embrace all creation with a healing love. And if we find ourselves like the stone that the builders rejected, then we can rest assured that the risen Christ is alive and well among us and within us.

—taken from the writings of Sister Carol Dempsey, O.P., which appears on the internet



THE LIBERATING POWER OF EASTER:

On this great feast of Easter — the most important liturgical celebration of the year — Paul’s letter to the Church at Corinth interprets the resurrection of Christ from the perspective of the Exodus event commemorated at the Jewish Passover meal [1 Corinthians 5:6-8]. By the time of Jesus, the Jews celebrated their liberation from bondage in Egypt with a sacred meal that included unleavened bread and roasted lamb. As part of the Passover celebration, pious Jews disposed of the old bread leavened by yeast — which they considered sinister and corrupting — and baked new unleavened bread, symbolizing a new purified life. The roasted lamb reminded them of the Exodus when God commanded the Israelite families in Egypt to slaughter a lamb, sprinkle the blood on their doorposts, roast the lamb and eat it in haste, ready to depart Egypt [see Exodus 12: 1-30].

Drawing on this symbolism, Paul instructs us: “Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough.” Since Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed, we should celebrate, not with the old yeast of “malice and wickedness,” but with the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

By linking Easter and the Exodus, Paul invites reflection on the liberating power of the paschal mystery — the death and resurrection of Christ. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus began his public ministry by presenting himself as a liberator who will free the captives and preach the good news to the poor [see Luke 4]. In his personal interactions, Jesus freed individuals from their fears, guilt and isolation. He healed lepers confined to the outskirts, freeing them to return to their families and friends. He liberated women from their social isolation and included them in his preaching and mission. His preaching called for forgiveness and reconciliation that breaks the cycle of violence and recrimination. Through his death and resurrection, Christ extended his liberating power to all people, in all times and all places.

By liberating us from all that enslaves us, Christ freed us for personal growth, for serving others, for contributing to society, for promoting the common good, and for extending the reign of God in this world.

Easter is a joyous feast because it proclaims the ultimate defeat of all the forces that impede, limit, and confine the human spirit; it celebrates the final triumph of Christ’s liberating grace, which brings us full human development. Christ, the paschal lamb, has given us a fresh start so we can put aside the enslaving patterns of the past and enjoy the new life of authentic freedom.

We can imagine people who can benefit from this liberating message — the married woman who still feels guilty over a teenage abortion; the collegian who is struggling to escape the drug culture; the executive who is caught up in the whirlwind of frenetic activity; the social worker who is overwhelmed by an excessive case load; the citizen fighting cynicism over partisan polarization; the parishioner who feels unfairly constrained by the pastor and his staff; and the pastor who feels burdened by administrative responsibilities. Human existence is inevitably limited and constrained — which means the Resurrection, with its liberating power, is good news for everyone, including ourselves.

In what specific way can the Easter celebration be liberating for you?

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

POSSIBILITY:

The willingness to consider possibility requires a tolerance of uncertainty.

—Rachel Naomi Remen

DOING THE WORK OF EASTER:

On most occasions, Easter and the Jewish feast of Passover overlap, but not this year. Easter symbolizes new life and often coincides with the spring season in the Northern Hemisphere. Springtime — a season of rejuvenation and rebirth, reminds us that before new life can emerge — the old must first pass away. Ecologically, the natural world is forever trying to renew itself. The brilliantly colored tree leaves of



— who has a vision while praying in his house in Caesarea. In this vision, he is told that his generosity on behalf of the Jews has been accepted by God. Cornelius is then advised to send for Peter.

Meanwhile Peter has a vision while experiencing hunger shortly before dinner. A large sheet presents Peter a menu of various creatures — which he is told to eat. Peter announces that he does not eat unclean things. The accompanying voice admonishes Peter: “What God has made clean, you have no right to call profane.” Peter was pondering all this when the two men sent by Cornelius arrive to take him to Caesarea. Cornelius has gathered his relatives and friends to listen to Peter’s words. Peter gives them a brief summary of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. His words are transforming.

The Holy Spirit descends, and baptisms occur. Peter and the early church extend the baptism of the Spirit from Jerusalem throughout the entire world. All creatures are clean now in the universal love of God through the redemptive love of Jesus.

John’s Gospel is also delightful and tender. As we stated above, it is dark, and Mary Magdala goes to the tomb of Jesus. She finds the tomb’s stone rolled back, but, fearing some perverse body-snatchers have taken the Body of Jesus away, she runs to tell Peter and John. They come running and enter the tomb — empty except for the cloths which had draped the dead corpse. They see and believe, but they do not understand or remember what scripture had said about His rising.

In these next few weeks of Easter, we will hear various descriptions of the drama produced in the lives of the early followers of Jesus after His Resurrection. Instead of perversity there is “reversity” — the darkness in which Mary goes to the tomb is changed into the new-day’s light. The emptiness of the tomb results in the fullness of creation. The enclosed tomb becomes the fullness of revelation. The private experience of Mary Magdala begins the communal believing. The personal searching of Peter and John are changed into the glorious searching by Jesus for all of humanity.

As Peter’s view of “clean and unclean” were reversed by his vision of the symbols of creation, so our belief in the resurrection of Jesus opens for us a view of the holiness of all created reality. The rising of Jesus begins the rising and gathering of all into the Kingdom which Jesus will present to His Father. All things which were created as a blessing, and breathed upon by the Spirit of God, are now seen as “good”.

The “reversity” will be highlighted even more as Jesus appears to those who had lost faith and abandoned Jesus. They will be gathered into the beginning of the Kingdom — the Church — as He untombs them from their shame. What was thought by the fragmented as unclean, is newly risen with Jesus. This “reversity” continues in the lives of those who allow the resurrected Jesus to untomb them. The Resurrection of Jesus brings us out of our darkness and ambiguity into the light of who He says we are.

The joy of Easter is that death is not our final stop — just as it wasn’t for Jesus. We have celebrated in the Easter Vigil the newly-welcomed baptized into our communities. We also re-celebrate our own being baptized into Christ’s immortality — we enter into God’s creative and redemptive love. Jesus came out of His tomb to call us out of ours, and He sends the Spirit to keep us out, if we desire. We have not seen, and yet we believe; and in this sight we receive the sacraments around us which point beyond to the Creator’s Hand.

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

THE SCHOOL OF LOVE:

The school of Christ is the school of love. In the last day, when the general examination takes place, love will be the whole syllabus.

—St. Robert Bellarmine

EASTER FEAR:

We have all heard of Easter joy. But how much we do know of Easter fear? That is the question that Mark's gospel poses, because in this resurrection account, there is very little joy to be found. When the women discover the empty tomb and they hear the news that Jesus is risen — they do not rejoice. They flee from the tomb and say nothing to anyone because they are afraid. Fear at the tomb might at first be puzzling. But upon closer reflection it contains a central message of the Easter story. The women were afraid because as soon as they realized that Jesus had been raised up, they also realized that their lives would have to change. As soon as they saw that the tomb was empty, they also knew that all that Jesus had taught them was reliable and true, that God was alive, that life was more powerful than death, and that their lives would have to show it.

We find ourselves in a very similar situation to the women at the tomb. If we don't believe in the resurrection, if we think that the message of Jesus is misguided or misdirected, we can go home and no one will expect very much of us. But the minute that we believe the message that Christ has been raised up — that God is now working in the world through Christ — then in that moment we must admit that people should see God in us. And that is where the fear comes in. For such a calling is an awesome responsibility.

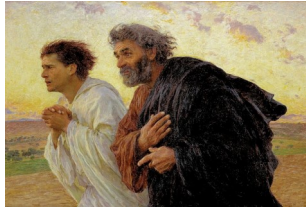
Yet there is no way around the fear. The women at the tomb remind us that whenever we encounter life, we encounter not only joy, but fear — not only grace but also responsibility. In our deepest moments of joy, is there not always a tinge of fear? When we realize we have been given a tremendous opportunity in our work, or our career, along with our joy is there not the doubt: “am I really up to this challenge?” When we find someone at last whom we love completely and that person loves us in return, do we not also find in the midst of that joy a question: “Can I be generous enough, can I be forgiving enough, can I be faithful enough to allow this love to last?” When we hold a newborn son or daughter in our arms for the first time and are overwhelmed with the joy that has been given to us, can we not hear in that joy a whisper asking: “Are you wise enough, are you brave enough, are you loving enough to shape this life into a new human being?”

One of the things that that fear in the midst of joy does for us is to remind us that life is real. As much as life is a blessing, it also calls for responsibility. It also asks us to live what we have been given to the best of our ability.

So how do we cope with this fear? How do we find the courage, even in our joys, to assume that we can live what is asked of us? Only by depending on one another. That is why we are here. That is why we are community, church. We come together as a people tonight sharing the same fears. The fears of whether we are good enough as a spouse, as a parent, as a friend, as a disciple. Yet we come together at Easter and stand together knowing that despite all of our fears and doubts we can still claim God's mercy and God's love. In a special way, we think of those who have prepared for Baptism and the other Easter Sacraments. All of them at some point have to ask themselves: “Am I up for this?” It is important for all of us to know that that mixture of joy and fear is the true sign of a disciple — something that every believer shares. We all need to know that being baptized into Christ — our willingness to be covered by the waters of baptism and rising to new life — is a sign to the world that despite all the fears and imperfections that we share together, we can still allow Jesus to be seen in our midst.

If your Easter does not have at least a bit of fear, you might be missing the fullness of the Easter message. Because the Easter message is that God is real, that Christ is risen, that life is stronger than death and that our lives should show it. Yes, that is a frightening call. But there is some fear in everything which has value. So, let us stand together and push through the fear to the joy. Let us admit our doubts, but choose to believe nonetheless. Let us join our lives together, and together with all of our imperfections, fearlessly proclaim: “Christ is risen. Alleluia!”

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



lost its grip. Jesus triumphed over death. God the Father raised Jesus his Son from the dead.

That good thief prayed one last prayer before his life came to an end. He said: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And Jesus replied to him: “I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” [Luke 23:42-43].

The world could not kill God. Nor can it kill those who immerse themselves into the Life of God. The act of faith of the Good Thief — his act of kindness in what he said to the Crucified Christ — resulted in his sharing the eternal life of that God whom the world tried to destroy. We, who have received the eternal life of the Lord at our Baptism, have been told that as long as we hold onto this Easter Life, He will raise us up when our lives come to an end.

The first New Testament Reading of the Easter Season is the most important lesson of our lives: “Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin” [Romans 6:3-6]. Paul does not just tell us about the Lord — he teaches us about ourselves. We have been given a new life. We are no longer held in the grip of evil. We are no longer slaves to sin. We are no longer part of a dead world. We are the living people of the Lord.

“Don't give up. Don't ever give up,” the North Carolina State basketball coach, Jim Valvano spoke so well, encouraging others to join him in the fight against cancer. On Easter, the Lord says the same thing to us: “Don't give up!”

We can never give up. We are engaged in the battle for the Kingdom of God.

The Lord says: “Don't give up when people mock you for your faith in me.” The Lord says: “Don't give up when others seek to destroy you for whom you are.” The Lord says: “Don't give up. Get up. Let me help you. Let me raise you up. Let me restore your life. Don't give up. Remember, I was killed so you can live.”

Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. And so have we. By living out our baptismal commitment, we join the Lord in defeating the grip of death.

Alleluia! Easter is not just about Jesus. It is about us. We have been given the New Life of the Lord. We cry out to Him with our lives: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And we receive the promise of faith — the great hope of Christianity — “Today you will be with me in paradise.”

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

THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH OF YOUR IDENTITY:

Jesus died well because he knew he was going to God and he would soon send his Spirit of Love to his friends. “It is good for you that I leave,” he said, “because unless I leave, I cannot send my Spirit who will lead you to the full communion, to the full truth, to the full betrothal” [see John 16]. With that Holy Spirit he knew that his beloved apostles would live better, happier lives.

This vision is not just about Jesus. It is also about you and me. Jesus came to share his identity with you and to tell you that you are the Beloved Sons and Daughters of God. Just for a moment try to enter this enormous mystery that you, like Jesus, are the beloved daughter or the beloved son of God. This is the truth. Furthermore, your belovedness preceded your birth. You were the beloved before your father, mother, brother, sister, or church loved you or hurt you. You are the beloved because you belong to God from all eternity.

God loved you before you were born, and God will love you after you die. In Scripture, God says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” This is a very fundamental truth of your identity. This is who you are whether you feel it or not. You belong to God from eternity to eternity. Life is just a little opportunity for you during a few years to say: “I love you, too.”

—Henri Nouwen

KILLED SO WE CAN LIVE:

In his passion narrative, St. Luke writes: “Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes. But this man has done nothing criminal” [Luke 23:40-41]. I always felt very uncomfortable reading those verses. It seemed to me to be so absurd! Yet, the evangelist Luke recorded it; he must have had a reason. Better yet, the Holy Spirit must have had a reason that the statement be recorded.

The words in question were spoken by a man whose name was never mentioned. He was only called a thief. Later, people would refer to him as “the Good Thief.” Tradition has given him the name “Dismas,” but we really do not know his name. His name is not important. It is what he said that is important.

And, yet what he said was so strange. What the Good Thief said was directed to the other thief hanging on a cross on the other side of Jesus. What made me so uncomfortable — what made it so absurd — is that he said that God Himself had been condemned. Certainly, this was an exaggeration, or at the very least a Lucan hyperbole for dramatic effect.

But Sacred Scripture is not so shallow. The Primitive Church recited the accounts of the Passion over and over, emphasizing every word, every scene, every concept. Why was St. Luke so adamant in recording that God had been condemned? What did the Holy Spirit want us to learn?

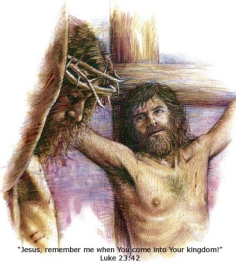
Simply, the Holy Spirit wanted us to know that the world had no use for God. The pagan Romans, like all pagans, were only concerned with materialism. They had their fables of gods, but the intelligentsia among them didn’t believe the stories. Nor did they really believe the emperors were divine. The Emperor Tiberius, in his death throes said, mockingly: “I must be becoming a god.” The leaders of the Jewish people believe in God, but they also believe that the political situation was too delicate to have a Messiah. The timing wasn’t right. A Messiah could bring down the wrath of Rome and threaten their cushy existence. They certainly did not want a Messiah who claimed to be the Son of the Most High God. They turned that claim against Jesus saying that this was blasphemy — giving them an excuse to condemn him to death.

The world had no use for God. It wanted God dead. So, His Incarnate Presence was murdered along with common, everyday criminals. The Evangelists wanted us to know that although the world killed God, only his human body died. So, the world killed God.

Years ago, *Time Magazine* had a cover article: “Is God Dead?” Of course, the article came out at Easter time, for you could expect no less from those who are on the attack against religion and against all who profess faith. The sad answer to the question “Is God dead?” is that for some people, “Yes, God is dead,” well, at least in their minds, and in their social structure He is dead.

The social structure of many in the world results in lives of quiet desperation. Many have no use for God. As a result, many question life itself. To the atheistic existentialist, the only reasonable conclusion to life is suicide. Thus, wrote Jean Paul Sartre. Obviously, it is not reasonable for people to kill themselves. The basic instinct is the instinct for survival. But it is common for people to condemn themselves to a life where they would be better off dead. For example, the person who lies and cheats and steals from all around him or her without caring how this effects others, condemns himself or herself to a life without any real friends — to a life with nothing to show for it after death. The person who uses others — including his or her family — to satisfy his or her own personal needs, has no real family, and no real life. People who are dead inside cannot envision a living God.

But God is not dead. He is not dead to the thief, to the murderer, to the prostitute, to the addict or to us — these people are dead to God. God is alive. Jesus rose from the dead and proclaimed that death has no hold on Him. Death has no hold on God. Yes, his Incarnate Body was put to death, but death

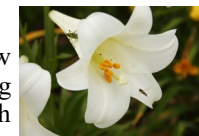


*Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!
Luke 23:42

A GRACIOUS PLENTY:

After the sorrowful emptiness of Good Friday, we celebrate the fullness of new life. Yesterday, broken dishes. Reproaches. Vinegar and gall. Today, the unfolding splendor of creation, retold: flowing springs, birds singing in the branches, the earth brimming with the fruitful works of God. This is how it can be for us, too. As division, anger, violence, and ugliness swirl around us, we may also feel depleted by our difficulties, discouraged by our failures, worn down by the demands of each day. But very soon, into those hollowed-out interior spaces, carved by pain and vulnerability, will flood the inundating joy of restoration and rebirth. For the past forty days, we have walked through the dark soulcape of Lent, aware with each step of our mistakes, our shortcomings, our flaws — aware, too, of the overwhelming mercy of God who gathers us up in his arms of love and forgiveness. Safe in those arms, we offer our broken selves to him, imperfect though we are. And through that offering, what is dead becomes alive again, animated by our faith in the risen Christ. As the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner wrote of the Resurrection, “One thing is necessary . . . for this irreversible deed of his to become the blessing of our life. He also has to burst open the grave of our heart, to rise from the center of our being where he is the power and the promise. There he is still in the process of doing this.” On this Holy Saturday, this liminal time of waiting between yesterday’s grief and tomorrow’s joy, we can — we must — give thanks for the mystery of the Resurrection, and strive to live out its meaning for the rest of our lives. Alleluia, alleluia!

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

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

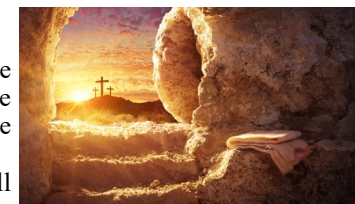
Monday:	Acts 2:14-33, Matthew 28:8-15
Tuesday:	Acts 2:36-41, John 20:11-18
Wednesday:	Acts 3:1-10, Luke 24:13-35
Thursday:	Acts 3:11-26, Luke 24:35-48
Friday:	Acts 4:1-12, John 21:1-14
Saturday:	Acts 4:13-21, Mark 16:9-15
2nd Week in Easter:	Acts 2:42-47, 1 Peter 1:3-9, John 20:19-31

MOVE TOWARD THE LIGHT:

You are constantly facing choices. The question is whether you choose for God or for your own doubting self. You know what the right choice is, but your emotions, passions, and feelings keep suggesting you choose the self-rejecting way.

The root choice is to trust at all times that God is with you and will give you what you most need. God says to you: “I love you. I am with you. I want to see you come closer to me and experience the joy and peace of my presence. I want to give you a new heart and a new spirit. I want you to speak with my mouth, see with my eyes, hear with my ears, touch with my hands. All that is mine is yours. Just trust me and let me be your God.”

—Henri Nouwen



TRANSLATING GOD’S LOVE:

God reveals His love for us in incredible ways. Sometimes, it’s through the words we hear — a homily at Mass that makes us feel like God Himself has taken over the mic to speak individually to us, or a talk that says exactly what we need to hear, and exactly when we need to hear it. Other times, it’s through the love we receive — a friend’s support amid hard times, or a stranger’s random act of kindness when we least expect it. As for me, God just so happened to pop in and blow my mind with His awesomeness last week as I sat eating a PB & J in the middle of Central America.

I wasn’t quite sure what to expect when I left for a week-long service trip in Nicaragua with my university’s Catholic group. I knew we would be digging septic tanks, that we needed to drink lots of water, and that the work wouldn’t be easy. But aside from that, I was eager to see how God would show up to us that week.

And boy, oh boy, did He show up!

After making progress on our septic tanks one day, our work group paused for a lunch break, gathered in a circle beneath the shade of a tree. There were about eight of us from all over the US — most of whom I didn’t know — and one Nicaraguan — our team leader and a part of the group coordinating our visit all week. The conversation began lighthearted, until our team leader began to tell us a story — his story. We listened intently as he spoke about the darkness he had faced, and the immeasurable light that he now knew with Christ by his side. It nearly brought us all to tears.

His words really spoke to me. But even more incredible was the fact that they were spoken through me. Our team leader spoke Spanish, so there, beneath the shady tree, he spoke to me alone. Phrase by phrase, I repeated his testimony in English to our group. The words he said were touching, but it was this connectedness that really got to me. The words I spoke were not my own, I realized. What people were hearing come from my mouth was just an echo of the original message — I was an intermediary, an instrument through which God’s message of love was translated into a language others could understand.

As I sat there, PB & J in hand, I realized something else, too — can’t the same be said for everything we do as Christians?

If we are to call ourselves Christians, odds are that at some point in our lives, Christ has spoken to us. We know the Good News; we know the power of the Cross — a physical embodiment of Christ’s sacrificial love. But this Good News is meant to be shared. In the words of the Apostles Peter and John: “it is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard” [Acts 4:20]. The light of the world does no good hidden; rather, we’re called to “set it on a lampstand, where it gives light to all” [Matthew 5:15].

For this reason, God calls us to be His translators — He commissions us to share His Good News, taking what we have seen and sharing it with others in a way they can understand — “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us” [2 Corinthians 5:20].

What a task.

Christ could very easily force His message to be heard. He could ensure that every person on earth knew of His sacrifice on the Cross. But instead, with immense humility, He lets us be His instruments — He lets us testify on His behalf. He lets us serve as active participants in His quest to make all souls aware of His love. He speaks to us, and then, once we have come to know His love, He speaks through us. Placing His words in our mouths, God entrusts us with a task of eternal significance: leading souls to Him.

But there’s an important thing to note in this whole process — we have to receive before we can give. To share God’s love with others, we must first receive this love wholeheartedly — through the

Sacraments, through reflection, and through opportunities to spend one-on-one time with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. We can’t just repeat what we’ve been told without understanding it in our heart, or else His message is lost on us. Our mouths may be open, but our voices reach no one. In the words of my campus chaplain: “you can’t give what you don’t have.”

For this reason, we have to stop and listen to the Lord — taking in all the “love notes” that He is sending us. We have to be able to look at a Cross and know deep in our hearts that Christ made that sacrifice for us individually. Only then can we look at our brothers and sisters and realize that, just as Christ loves us, so, too, does He love each of them. As St. John tells us: “In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we almost must love one another” [1 John 5:10-11]. God loves us. This is at the heart of all we do. If we know this, then the natural response is first to love Him back, and then to spread His love to all around us — offering up our voices to translate His message.

Don’t keep God’s love for you bottled up. You are His translator — You are the instrument through which He wishes to play a love song to the world. Sing His praises and reach out to people — wherever they are on their walk with Him. You’d be surprised the ways He can use you.

If you don’t know God’s love as yet, then prepare yourself — God’s reaching out to you right now, using everything around you as a testament to His love. So listen up. You’d be surprised where you can hear His voice.

—taken from the writings of Faith Noah, an associate of the Bible Geek

LIFE TEEN and EDGE:

Our Life Teen and EDGE youth group is meeting in-person again. We will meet for an hour beginning at 11:30 AM following our 10 AM Sunday Mass in the Chapel. If you are unable to join us, there are many resources available for you on the Life Teen



website — lifeteen.com. There are numerous blogs and videos for you to connect with. The Life Teen national office continues to release many new programs. **Please contact Father John for more information. And please join us each Sunday for our Mass at 10 AM — in person or live-streamed, and then come to our Life Teen/EDGE gathering after Mass.** And above all, let us continue to join each other in prayer. **Father John is available for you. Please contact him [cell: 216-570-9276].**

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — APRIL 20th:

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.

THE THEOLOGY OF “SLOWING DOWN”:

The Lord manifests Himself to those who stop for some time in peace and humility of heart. If you look in murky and turbulent waters, you cannot see the reflection of your face. If you want to see the face of Christ, stop and collect your thoughts in silence, and close the door of your soul to the noise of external things.

—St. Anthony of Padua

