

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

**~ A Prayer in Times of Doubt ~**

**My Lord God,  
I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will end.  
Nor do I really know myself,  
and the fact that I think I am following your will  
does not mean that I am actually doing so.**

**But I believe that the desire to please you  
does in fact please you.  
And I hope I have that desire  
in all that I am doing.  
I hope that I will never do  
anything apart from that desire.  
And I know that if I do this  
you will lead me by the right road,  
though I may know nothing about it.**

**Therefore I will trust you always  
though I may seem to be lost  
and in the shadow of death.  
I will not fear,  
for you are ever with me,  
and you will never leave me  
to face my perils alone.  
Amen.**

—Thomas Merton

# 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.*

**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

**DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY:**

On April 30, 2000, Pope John Paul II declared that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easters was to be called **Divine Mercy Sunday**. The message and devotion to Jesus as the Divine Mercy is based on the writings of Saint Faustina Kowalska, an uneducated Polish nun who, in obedience to her spiritual director, wrote a diary of about 600 pages recording the revelations she received about God's mercy. Even before her death in 1938, the devotion to **The Divine Mercy** had begun to spread. The message of Divine Mercy is nothing new; it is a reminder of what the Church has always taught through scripture and tradition — that God is merciful and forgiving, and that we, too, must show mercy and forgiveness. But in the Divine Mercy devotion, the message takes on a powerful new focus. The message is a called to all to a deeper understanding that God's love is unlimited and available to everyone — especially to the greatest sinners.

It has been our tradition to sing the *Divine Mercy Chaplet* after Mass on this day, but because of Father John's scheduling conflicts, we will not celebrate this devotion publicly. We hope that you will take time today to privately pray the *Divine Mercy Chaplet*.

**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 difference 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.

**THIS IS IMPORTANT:**

We must be aware that the people to whom evangelization is addressed are not only others, but also ourselves — believers in Christ and active members of the People of God. And we must convert every day, receive the Word of God and change our life: every day.

—Pope Francis

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

- For the victims of the earthquake in Taiwan and for the first responders.
- 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 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.
- For Father Donald Fetters, C.S.C.
- For Michaela Stofey
- For Michael Walsh
- For Zachary Guy

**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 [3/30/24] ----- \$ 810.00**

**Total Offerings: Sunday [3/31/24] ----- \$ 1,728.00**

**AN IMPORTANT LESSON:**

Yes, my heart's dear one, Jesus, is here with His cross. Since you are one of His favorites, he wants to make you into His likeness. Why be afraid that you will not have the strength to carry this cross without a struggle? On the way to Calvary, Jesus did indeed fall three times, and you, poor little child, would like to be different from your spouse, would rather not fall a hundred times if necessary to prove your love to Him by getting back up with even more strength than before your fall!

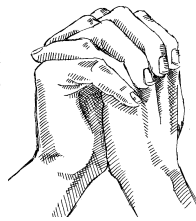
—St. Therese of Lisieux

**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 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 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.
- For Rebekah Klein, daughter of long-time Gilmour Science Teacher and coach, Jeff Klein, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Patty Szaniszló, Chapel Office Associate, who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For Bob Lisowski, father of Father Robert Lisowski, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for cancer.



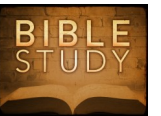
**WOMEN’S EVENING OF RETREAT — SAVE THE DATE:**

Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup> 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 (440) 473-3560 or [szaniszl0p@gilmour.org](mailto:szaniszl0p@gilmour.org)



**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10<sup>th</sup>:**

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> 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 7: 2 <sup>nd</sup> Week in Easter	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, April 8: Feast of the Annunciation	NO MASS
Tuesday, April 9:	12:00 noon; 2:00 PM
Wednesday, April 10:	8:30 AM; 9:45 AM; 2:00 PM
Thursday, April 11: St. Stanislaus	NO MASS
Friday, April 13:	NO MASS
Saturday, April 14: 3 <sup>rd</sup> Week in Easter	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, April 15: 3 <sup>rd</sup> 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, Maria Fruster, and ceased Members of the Blazek, Heryak, Orehek, Tran, Wyrwas, 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.



**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. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.



**REFLECTION FOR THE WEEK:**

Picture, if you will, what it was like in the upper room where the disciples had gathered following the death of Jesus. This is the same room in which a few nights before, they had all gathered with Jesus for Passover. But now there is no singing, no eating or drinking, and no telling of old traditional events. There is also no Jesus. There is silence and separation. Each person is downcast, and every once in a while someone checks the lock on the door — just to make sure. They are not a community — only confusion. But in another way, they were bounded together by their fear of the unknown. Perhaps they would have been attacked for the allegiance to Jesus, perhaps there was nothing to fear. Fear is not a rational reaction, yet fear can feel so overwhelming. Fear leaves us unable to move forward in a productive way.

This picture stands in stark contrast to life in the early Church, where those who had been baptized at Easter, wore their white garments throughout the next week which ended on this the eighth day. That day became known as “White Sunday” [Acts 4:32-35]. Even today when the white garment is placed on the person, the accompanying prayer asks for the grace that the Christian dignity — which the white garment represents — with help of family and friends, will be brought “unstained into the everlasting life of heaven.”

What led to this difference? Jesus comes into the locked room; His first words to the fearful disciples is: “Peace be with you!” as he shows them his hands and sides for reassurance that he really is Jesus. The sight of Jesus brings joy and relief to the disciples. Being together in a group most certainly helped the disciples understand what they were seeing and hearing [John 20:19-31].

Thomas was not with the disciples during that first appearance of Jesus and expressed a healthy skepticism. Jesus knew that Thomas was not doubting his faith, but was rather protecting the integrity of the disciples by wanting to confirm this amazing story. When Jesus appears again, rather than shaming or scolding Thomas, Jesus simply gives Thomas what he needs to believe — the opportunity to examine his wounds. How can we hear this story and not be assured the Jesus always gives us what we need when we are open to believing, especially when we have a healthy skepticism?

The Scripture Readings for this 2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Easter build on this “leap of faith.” St. Luke’s Acts of the Apostles reminds us that a community of believers can be of one heart and minds. Certainly witnessing the physical resurrection of Jesus bonded the disciples in an extraordinary manner. They were a true community by ensuring everyone had what they needed. Yet as Jesus taught the disciples in the Upper Room, faith is available to all — not just those few who had the opportunity to touch the wounds of the resurrected Jesus. As a community of believers we have the responsibility to care for each and every member of our community.

The Book of Acts of the Apostles gives us a picture of just how family and friends helped the new members of the community in the days of the early Church. They sold their property and gave the proceeds to the apostles who distributed them to those in need. They held everything in common and no one was in need. The early Church was a community

The word “community” comes from two Latin words — one meaning “with”, and the other meaning “oneness” or “gift.” So a real community places their gifts in the hands and hearts of the others. Easter invites us to deepen our awareness of all the gifts that God has given this world through its being created and blessed by the redemptive love of Jesus. We ask that we may be free enough to hold our gifts in common with our sisters and brothers. We hold them gently and generously as having been given and given to be shared. We pray to be more receptive to the movements of the Holy Spirit as we attempt to stay out of any of our favorite tombs.

The more we are aware of who we are, and accept who we are and who we are not, the less “envy”

**LIVING THE EASTER VISION:**

Looking back at my pre-scriptural religious education, it seems the only “vision” instilled in me was my being in heaven one day. If I daydreamed about anything having to do with this earth, it probably revolved around all my friends and family converting to Catholicism so we could spend eternity together. I certainly didn’t share the vision of the gospel Jesus.

That’s why many of the Easter season scripture readings from the Book of Acts of the Apostles are so important. Scholars agree that the glimpses of the early Jerusalem Christian community which Luke provides most probably aren’t accurate historical photographs of that church — a community in which “there was no needy person among them” [Acts 4:32-35]. Luke seems simply to be depicting an ideal community — one in which Christians are living as Jesus expects them to live. Luke is sharing Jesus’ vision with his readers, encouraging them to spend their lives trying to make that vision a reality. Unlike my early religious education, it had little to do with getting into heaven. It was much more about creating a little bit of heaven here on earth.

This vision of creating heaven revolves around giving up personal ownership of property. If you read the accounts which come a little later in Acts, it is clear — especially from the Stories of Ananias and Sapphira — that no one was obligated to take such a drastic step in order to become a Christian. Yet, if we’re other Christs, the possibility of such an action should always be in the back of our minds.

Of course, the reason for such an extraordinary move should always be in the front of our minds — love. The unknown author of John’s Letters clearly understands its positioning. Love is always central for all Jesus’ followers. “We know that we love the children of God,” he writes, “when we love God and obey his commandments” [see 1 John 4]. Our faith can only “conquer the world” by falling back on the power of love.

Yet for most of us, even more drastic than giving up property is giving up revenge. This is something that John’s Jesus expects all of us to do all of the time. That’s one of the reasons he gives us his Spirit — to help us forgive others [John 20:19-31].

We Catholics have been so accustomed to hearing Jesus’ words about “forgiving” and “retaining” as the proof text for the church’s power to “hear confessions,” that we forget he never wanted anyone to retain someone’s sins. He simply seems to be pointing out the consequences of such behavior. In case we haven’t noticed, when we forgive a person, that person’s sins are actually forgiven. When we go against his teachings and retain a person’s sins, those sins remain part of who that person is. We then not only have to worry about our sins, we also have to worry about his or her sins. Unforgiven, they become part of our sinfulness.

I frequently remind my students that Scripture provides us with two separate occasions for the Spirit’s arrival — Pentecost morning in Acts [see Acts 2] and Easter Sunday night in John [20:19-31]. I also point out that the Acts narrative is accompanied by several “disturbing” phenomena — noise, wind and fire, reminding us that the Spirit always disturbs our otherwise tranquil life. The same is true of John’s narrative. Fulfilling Jesus’ vision of a forgiving community can be just as disturbing as noise, wind and fire. It’s at right angles to many of our personalities.

No wonder Thomas wants to see and touch the risen Jesus’ wounds as proof he actually exists. It’s really Jesus only if this “new creation” can show the scars resulting from living out his vision. It is probably also true that this same Jesus will check on our scars when we finally encounter him at the pearly gates. If we haven’t shared his wounds, I presume neither did we share his vision.

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



Maybe things would have been different if Thomas had conversed more with Mary Magdalene. He knew that he and the rest of the guys had steered clear of the cross while Mary and other women remained with Jesus in helpless, silent solidarity. On the other hand, Mary and her companions went seeking in spite of the hopelessness of the situation. They became the first witnesses to the Resurrection.

While the majority of the disciples hid in fear behind locked doors, Mary had gone out to find hope in the midst of tragedy. Whatever Thomas was doing, he was not hiding with the others. Was he looking for more than the others had offered him?

What they said sounded delusional — and this was hardly the first time that he thought that way about their ideas. Doesn't it make sense that if the disciples really believed that Jesus had risen, they would no longer be in hiding, that they would be different?

At this point, Luke's description of the early community [Acts 4:32-35] offers us some insight. Luke is bragging on the early community and the deep solidarity that flowed from their faith. Even if Luke exaggerates, he's holding up an ideal for us. Luke tells us that after believing in the testimony of the apostles, the community responded by acting like people who had discovered the meaning of their lives and for whom nothing else mattered. Luke said that they were of one heart and mind. They demonstrated this by considering themselves such a unified community that everyone would seek what another needed. No one could even imagine hoarding; that would have undermined their new identity. Their love and concern included all — they were one. This was their new identity in Christ.

Thomas didn't see anything like that in his friends in those first days after Jesus' resurrection. He didn't see them changed. Nothing about them told him that they were living a new reality. Then, while Thomas was with them — explaining his disappointment? — Jesus again appeared in their midst and blessed them with peace. Looking to Thomas he said: "Come, look at my wounds, touch the scars and signs of death and see that even this extreme of evil did not win. I accepted all this believing that my Father would transform everything. Now, let's continue the transformation, beginning with you — all of you." What Jesus offered them was nothing less than what he had prayed for when he was with them before his death — "May they be one as you and I are, I in them and them in me that the world may know that you sent me" [John 17:21-23].



The concrete sign of their new unity was that the Holy Spirit drew them into community where they overcame narrow self-concern and judgment. Forgiveness of one another functioned like allowing a wound to heal, of ceasing to pick at a scab. Forgiveness was the only medicine that would allow their whole body to heal. Like Jesus, everyone who had been injured would have scars — but those scars could become signs that injury was not the final word among them.

When Jesus appeared, he bequeathed them his own mission: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Those disciples had seen how Jesus lived his mission — never focusing on sin, but drawing forth each person's greatest potential. That was now their call.

The invitation to believe in the Resurrection asks for a leap of faith that starts with our heart, our hands, and our feet — and not with our intellect. If we believe in the Resurrection — in Jesus' victory over all evil — we will be liberated. We will not be contained by our fear of now having enough.

When we proclaim: "Lord, by your cross you have set us free," we claim the freedom to love everyone as a part of ourselves, to learn the healing practice of forgiveness and the freedom that comes from the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the only one who can accomplish this in us. When this happens, the world will be able to touch the reality of the Gospel in us and come to believe.

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

directs our attitudes and choices. It was this positive attitude that enabled the early Christian believers to distribute all their possessions and share them with the needy. They were inspired by the Holy Spirit in their belief in the Resurrection of Jesus as a freer way of looking at life on this earth.

In his book, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, Tracy Kidder quotes a Haitian saying that God gives the gifts, but doesn't share. The sharing is up to us. "Envy" is an abiding sense that we are not enough and must buy, achieve, construct, or fabricate some dressing or pretense that will fool others — but not ourselves. Instead of a joyful spirit, the envious person smiles only at those who are fooled.

Adam and Eve had to dress themselves to avoid the shame of their being naked. They had to accumulate and preserve their personal "things" by which they and others would identify them. But the early Christian Community was in a divesting spirit, because they were growing in their identities — personal and communal. God had given them the gift of the Holy Spirit to affirm them as beloved human beings. The early apostles held on to nothing except their belief in Jesus and the "power of His Resurrection."

There are the materially needy who wait for God's sharing through us. There are the others who need the blessing and comfort and encouragement of us who have become aware of and accept the sacramental name the Spirit offers us through Baptism and the other Sacraments. We are breathed into, so as to move us beyond our mountains of fear and doubt. "Envy" is slowly replaced by blessed gratitude. Jesus Christ has given us Himself, and he has also given us ourselves. This is what makes possible the grateful sharing which becomes our personal subtitle.



In John's Gospel [20:19-31], we hear is a continuation of the Adam and Eve story. God has come looking for them, but they were ashamed of who they said they were — they were in hiding and had lost their original names. Humanity who would follow their wandering, would continue the search for their name.

Jesus enters a similar group of human beings, lost and hiding for fear. The "Lost-and-Found" department is now open for business. Jesus is the Finder and meets them in a condition in which they all would wish were different. Instead of accusation, there is "Peace be with you." The disciples "rejoiced when they saw the Lord." They were divested of their fear, shame, and old names. They were now "apostles" or "those sent". In a real sense, that is the name of "the Christ" — and He passes that name and personal subtitle on to His early church.

Thomas is a perfect picture of "envy". He, as with Adam and Eve, wants to eat of the apple of sensed-based data. Jesus affirms Thomas' need to know, but blesses all of us who want to eat of that apple, but trust the experiences of others — and the grace to live beyond the mountains of fear and doubt.

Trusting what we are told without seeing signs is most difficult for us "envious" pilgrims. Like in a race, we keep watching for the faster runners to be passing by us going back to the beginning. We want certainty so that we can be comfortable that we will make it. We feel like we have a right to know!

"Envy" is a human burden. It can confine us to prisons of fearful comparing. It can result in such inferiority that any attempts at anything is terrifyingly tense. It isolates us and mistakenly names us, "loser". Jesus rose to raise us from the gravitational pull of "envy" to the upright walking the journey of believing.

Pray for the grace to embrace the life of faith Jesus has given each of us. Ask yourself these questions: "when does my fear lead me to sin?" How can I hear Jesus telling me "peace, be with you" in my darkest moments? "In what ways can I reimagine living the commandments in small, daily acts of commitment to community?" "Where can I find the wisdom to support someone who is retreating or attacking out of fear?" Be grateful, knowing that Jesus is with each of us in the moments when we find ourselves searching for answers when trust is lacking.

—taken from the writings of Mary Lee Brock and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet 5

**MEET THE REAL THOMAS:**

Whenever you see a picture of St Thomas the Apostle, he is almost always represented as touching the wound in Christ's side. But, in fact, the Gospel does not record him actually ever having done this [John 20:19-31]. Christ certainly showed him his wounds and invited him to put his finger into them, but it seems that Thomas never took up the offer. What he did instead was to make an extraordinary profession of faith with the words: "My Lord and my God."

Interestingly, apart from this incident, Thomas is portrayed in the Gospels as being very brave. In St John's account of the raising of Lazarus when Jesus gets the message of Lazarus' illness and decides to go up to Jerusalem, we find Thomas saying: "Let us go too and die with him" [John 11:16]. These are not the words of a timid and fearful person — these are not the words of a person beset by doubts. And yet when the other Apostles tell Thomas of their meeting in the Upper Room with the Risen Lord — which for some unknown reason he had missed — Thomas flatly refuses to believe them.

What Thomas had missed out on was an encounter with the Risen Christ. And, no matter what the other Apostles said, he refused to believe. He wasn't open to persuasion or reasoning. And we would all probably agree — "Rightly so!" After all, faith does not come from reasoning or from relying what anyone else tells us. Faith is a gift of God, and it principally comes through an encounter with the Lord.

In Thomas' case, this was the actual presence of the Risen Jesus who showed him the wounds of his crucifixion. In the case of St Paul, it was his experience on the road to Damascus [see acts 9]. In every case, let me suggest, faith comes through an encounter with the Lord. Mostly these are not physical encounters like that of Thomas, but they are just as real nonetheless.

Each one of us comes to faith by a different route — things happen to us on life's journey that help us to see the hand of God at work in our lives. As a child, we might be brought up by our parents to believe in God, and we grow up accustomed to pray each day. In this way prayer becomes a natural and even essential part of our lives.

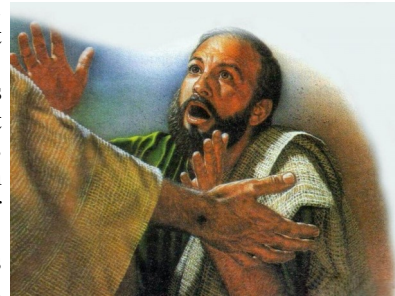
But this is not merely the saying of prayers. What our parents have initiated us into is a dialogue with the Lord — with a person, with God himself. Each time we pray we are entering into an encounter with God. At some point or other the young person may face the criticism of others, and then end up questioning whether this is a real dialogue with God, or whether they are just talking to themselves. If their prayers are more than just superficial, they will come to the realization that this certainly is no empty dialogue, but is in fact a real and meaningful conversation with the Lord. And through this insight their faith is strengthened and moves to a new and deeper level.

As life goes on, our faith is validated by all sorts of events and occurrences. I clearly remember talking to a group of secondary school students. We were discussing prayer, and I asked them if they ever felt that their prayers were answered. One girl said that together with her whole family she had prayed very hard for her grandmother who had cancer. She explained that although they had prayed for a cure, the grandmother actually got worse and eventually died. Despite this she felt that her prayers had been answered because her grandmother had died peacefully and was happy to go to God.

It was also clear that this girl's own faith had been strengthened through this experience and that she felt closer to God and to her family as a result.

Thomas said that he wanted proof. He said that unless he could put his finger into the wounds he would not believe. But when Christ appeared to him, that was enough — he never reached his hand out to actually touch the wounds. He did not need to. Instead he fell to the ground with the great words: "My Lord and my God".

Throughout his life, Thomas never lacked courage. Tradition has it that he preached the Gospel in



This Spirit, since it is generated by gratitude, naturally is a Spirit of charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, faith, and chastity. It is then, too, a spirit that is naturally incompatible with idolatry, adultery, violence, gossip, factionalism, jealousy, rage, and infidelity.

When we meditate on how the Holy Spirit is generated, we are under less illusion as to what it means to live in the Spirit. To believe that we are living in the Spirit when our lives are not permeated by, and radiating, gratitude is to be dangerously deluded. We must be clear about this, lest, as poet William Stafford puts it: "Following the wrong God home, we may both miss our star."

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

**AT THE HEART OF EASTER IS FAITH IN JESUS:**

Throughout the course of the Easter Season, scripture writings of St. John are prominent. On this 2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Easter we read from the 1<sup>st</sup> Letter of John. The letter was probably written near the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century by a member of the community dedicated to the Beloved Disciple. The author incorporates themes from John's Gospel which rebuked the "deceivers" who have left the community, showing a lack of love for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Among the various themes found in John's letter is the theme of faith. Faith is at the heart of our relationship with God — "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God" [1 John 5:1-6]. The title "Christ" — which means anointed one — came to be associated with the promised Jewish Messiah, and was later applied by Christians to Jesus the risen Lord. Confessing Jesus as the Christ is to express belief in him as the fulfillment of the divine promise to save Israel.

Having faith in Jesus means we are begotten of God, made children of the Father, and born into the divine family, formed into brothers and sisters of Christ. This close familial relationship grounds the command to love one another. Faith and love are intimately connected, forming a fruitful Christian life.

In all of John's writings, his emphasis is on the divinity of Jesus. Thus not only is Jesus the Messiah, he is also, and more fundamentally, the Son of God. The community of the Beloved Disciple had a high Christology — a strong sense of the divinity of Jesus as the Word made flesh. This faith enables Christians to conquer the world, which is subject to sin and darkness. Our faith in Christ — our personal relationship to him as Lord — empowers us to fight and defeat all the evil forces in the world.

John's Christology is Trinitarian — belief in Jesus includes faith in God who is Father of all, Jesus who is Son of God, and the Holy Spirit who testifies to the truth.

What can we get out of prayerful reflection on John's letter, and its insightful analysis of faith? Those who have a strong faith in Jesus as a wise teacher and preeminent moral guide could gain a better appreciation of Christ as the divine Son of God. Those who have a very private faith in Jesus the Savior could expand their faith by applying it to spreading the kingdom of justice and peace in the world. Those who have trouble accepting fellow Christians with a very different theology and piety could remember that they too are children of God, saved by Christ and animated by the Spirit. Those with a faith centered primarily on Christ could develop a deeper appreciation of the role of the Holy Spirit in a lively spirituality. We could all look for ways to integrate the virtues of faith and charity more effectively in our daily lives.

What concrete step can you take to deepen your faith in Jesus Christ?

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

**SEEING [CHANGE] IS BELIEVING:**

Seeing is believing. Is that the theme of this 2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Easter? Folks hear John's Gospel and think of Thomas "the doubter". What about thinking of Thomas as the guy determined to walk the walk and not just talk the talk? Consider it. How was Thomas to comprehend the meaning of what his companions told him when they said: "We have seen the Lord?" He knew these men and their tendency to believe what they wanted [John 20:19-31].

**LIVING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT:**

Few expressions so succinctly summarize what is asked of us as Christians as does the expression: “to live in the Spirit.” Too often, however, this phrase is used in a way that is too pious, too over-charged with charismatic fervor, or too theologically abstract to have much meaning for ordinary people. It may well summarize Christian life, but it can also be little more than a very vague platitude. What does it mean “to live in the Spirit?”

St. Paul, in attempting to specify this, is anything but piously deluded or theologically abstract. Rather he speaks with a clarity that leaves almost no room for vagueness or false sentiment. He begins by a certain “via negative”, telling us that, if in our lives there is “lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factionalism, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like” [Galatians 5:19-21], then we are not living in the spirit, pure and simple. Conversely, we are living in the spirit when, in our lives, there is “charity, joy, peace, patience, endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity” [Galatians 5:22-23].

The Spirit is present only when charity, joy, peace, patience, endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity are deeply in our lives — and permeate the air around us. This is a valuable insight because, if we take Paul’s word’s seriously, we can never delude ourselves into identifying true life in the Spirit with what it is so often confused with — namely, false piety and over-privatized sentiment in pious circles, and confrontation out of hurt, paranoia, and narrow loyalties in both liberal and conservative circles. When the fruits of the Spirit are absent — irrespective of how spiritually confident and self-righteous we might feel or how right our cause might seem — then the Spirit too is absent. We must be clear about this.

The Spirit is present only when charity, joy, peace, patience, endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity are deeply in our lives — and permeate the air around us.

The Holy Spirit, as classically defined in theology, is “the love between the God and Christ, the Father and the Son.” It is in meditating on this concept that we come to some understanding of what it means to live in the Spirit. Let me try to elaborate on this by using an image — that of romantic love in its peak fervor.



Imagine a man and a woman who are deeply, passionately, and completely in love. What will characterize their relationship? Constant giving and receiving, resulting in an ever deeper relationship and an ever intensifying gratitude — which will leave them both, daily, feeling ever more mellow, joyful, peaceful, mild, patient, chaste, and wanting to reach out and share with others what is so quickening in their own lives. Moreover, their love for each other will create, around them, an ambience, a climate, an atmosphere, of charity, joy, peace, patience, mildness, and chastity. The movement of giving-and-receiving-in-gratitude between them will create a warm hearth where others will spontaneously come to seek warmth in a world which offers too little peace, patience, joy, and the like.

Such a relationship can be a modest indicator for what happens in the Trinity — of how the Father and the Son generate the Spirit — and what results from this generation.

- The Father constantly creates and gives life.
- The Son receives life from the Father and gives it back in gratitude.
- This then — as is true in all relationships wherein gift is received lovingly — makes it possible for the Father to give even more to the Son.
- As this flow of life — this giving and receiving — goes on, gratitude intensifies and an energy, a spirit, the Holy Spirit, is created.

many different countries — ultimately travelling as far as India, where he was martyred. His faith was surely tested more in that final moment of his death than it ever was before. But in the end, he remained resolute. His words to Jesus: “My Lord and my God” — or something very like them — were surely on his lips as he gave up his spirit.

Thomas had the extraordinary privilege of knowing Jesus in the flesh, and also of meeting him after his resurrection. But the greatest encounter of all was at the moment of his own martyrdom when he was drawn into the presence of God in heaven. It is this final and ultimate encounter that we are all preparing for.

The best preparation of all is for us to open our eyes and see the hand of God in our lives, and for us to spend our time in prayer and dialogue with him — but most of all by sharing his body and blood in the Eucharist. It is in these ways that our faith is fed and strengthened. It is by doing these things that at that final moment — with God’s grace — that we will make that great and wonderful prayer of Thomas our own.

There are two halves to John’s Gospel. Up until now in our reflection, we have only been looking at the second part about St Thomas. The first half however is an account of how Jesus breathed on the Apostles and bestowed on them the ability to forgive sins. We see here the origin of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. He knows the havoc that sin causes in the human heart, and it is for this reason that he gives the power to forgive sins to the Apostles and their successors. Jesus knows how important this ministry is for the Church — he is aware that his followers will need to experience forgiveness again and again in their lives.

The bestowal of this great gift comes at a very crucial moment in John’s Gospel — it occurs during his very first meeting with the Apostles after the resurrection. This shows us how important this gift is for the Church — it is the very first thing that Jesus does after the resurrection.

The Church takes this ministry of reconciliation very seriously, and it sees itself as a fountain of forgiveness and healing for our battered and bruised world. Welcoming repentant sinners and dispensing forgiveness is therefore one of the principal tasks of its Bishops and Priests. May all of us make frequent use of this holy and healing sacrament.

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

**MEN’S RETREAT — SAVE THE DATE:**

**Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 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](mailto:szaniszlop@gilmour.org)**

**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.



**MARKS OF WOUNDS AND GLORY:-**

There is not a verse of the scriptures that is wasted. Christians have always followed the example of the Jewish rabbis in believing that there is no verse of the scripture that is accidental. Every verse, every word, has significance for our lives. This is certainly true of John's Gospel for this 2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Easter [20:19-31]. Jesus appears in his risen body to the disciples. Yet that body bears the marks of his passion, the nail prints in his hands, the gash in his side. Now the presence of those marks might at first seem to be simply the disciples describing what they saw. But the scriptures pay great attention to the marks, because they tell us who we are. They even invite Thomas to touch them. From this we can be assured that their presence is much more than accurate description. They are meant to carry a message — a truth for our lives. The truth is this: there is power and life in woundedness.

In his risen body Jesus bears the marks of his passion. He does not hide them; He wants it to be clear to us that when we admit our sins, our mistakes, our failures, and our brokenness in light of his resurrection, they can lead to life. This truth is contrary to the normal way we approach our limitations. We all want to put our best foot forward. We want to promote our success and downplay our failures. We deny the mistakes that we make, the faults and wounds that we bear. But in doing this we move away from the truth of who we are. Whenever we act in a way that is contrary to what is real, it diminishes us rather than strengthens us.

Now Jesus is certainly not telling us that we should place our wounds on display — that we should flaunt our mistakes and failures. We all know people who have unfortunately built their identity around their weaknesses. We have met people who have told us way too much about their mistakes. But it can be healthy — in the right context and at the right time — to uncover our wounds and even to let others touch them. When we have lost someone through death, divorce, or rejection, we try to be strong. But we must also mourn. To shed tears is the first step towards healing. When we are afraid of something in our family, in our world, about our health, admitting that fear and letting someone we trust touch it does not harm us. Instead it prepares us for what lies ahead. When we have given in to our own selfishness when we have hurt someone through a word or a deed, it is not an embarrassment to say I was wrong. Saying I am sorry to our spouse, our children, our parent, our friend is a statement of truth that can open a new beginning. There is power in our wounds, a power that comes from the truth.



Occasionally someone has asked me as a priest when I hear confessions, do I ever end up thinking less of a person [who has come in to confess a serious sin. I can honestly tell you that in over 30 years of priestly ministry that has never occurred. There is something powerful and holy about the honest admission of a fault in God's presence. Contrary to making me think less of a person, it actually makes their dignity and their goodness easier to see. I always walk away from such encounters humbled and aware of God's presence.

The risen Christ comes before us today bearing the marks of his passion. Jesus does not hide his wounds and neither need we. Admitting our imperfections, fears, doubts, and mistakes does not defeat us. It releases power for healing and for life. We do not need to deny the marks of our wounds. For we believe that God will change us as God changed Jesus. We trust that the marks of our wounds will become the marks of our glory.

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

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:**

Father John is available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you. Please call him [440-473-3560] to arrange for this experience. All social distancing will remain in place. Always remember the Lord's invitation: "I will give them a heart with which to understand that I am the Lord. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart" [Jeremiah 24:7].



with a serious illness, or when our life plans are destroyed by the malicious actions of another, perhaps a former spouse. It was easy for the Disciple Thomas to believe in Jesus when he experienced his healing, and when the words of the Lord burned within his own heart. It was difficult for Thomas to believe when his own world appeared to fall apart on Good Friday.

Thomas doubted the Resurrection because he could not get passed the crucifixion. It is often the same with us. We are so torn up by many crises in our lives, that sometimes we cannot get passed those crises to an experience of the new life of Christ that is offered on Easter. We can be so torn up by the physical events of our lives that we close the door to the possibility of the spiritual. That is essentially what Thomas did. That is what we tend to do. It is a normal human reaction to suffering. It really does not mean that we do not believe in God.

We are not even questioning his goodness, even when we shake our fist at heaven and shout: "How could you?" We just are being held back by the pain of physical life from recognizing the joy of the spiritual life. Many people persecute themselves for having these thoughts, and wonder if God will forgive them. When you love someone, you are more concerned about their pain than you are about the way they express their pain. God loves us too much to be concerned with anything other than our pain. At the same time, he tells us to give him our pain and take a step out of physical suffering and a step into spiritual joy.

That is really what Easter is about. Easter is all about entering into the spiritual. Easter is about the conquest of the physical by the spiritual. Easter is about life conquering death, love conquering hate, Jesus rising from a tomb, and us taking a step out of the physical and into the spiritual. Doubting is part of the human condition. It will exist in all our lives to some extent or other until the time that we see our God face to face. At that time the whole concept of doubt will be pointless. But until then, we recognize our humanity and we humbly ask God to admit us as we are, human beings with human limitations, into his divinity.

Faith is the one gift that God promises will be given to all who seek it. But even if we were to have the faith of a saint, we would still have doubts. Joe Corbett, a very wise man I knew who passed away in 2011, once told me something that I have treasured throughout my life. One of his adult sons told him that he wished he had the faith his father had and went to daily Mass like his dad did. Joe answered: "I don't go to daily Mass because I have great faith, I go to Mass because I need faith."

Those words have always stuck with me. When Doubting Thomas made his act of faith, Jesus responded: "You believe because you have seen. Blessed are those who have not seen but believe." Jesus was talking about us. He was calling us blessed because we have often taken a leap of faith and left the limitations of the physical for the infinite gifts of the spiritual.

Remember Thomas had an experience of the Resurrected Jesus. We only have an experience of an empty tomb. We have not seen, but we believe. At the conclusion of the Gospel of John, John wrote: "All these things have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you might have life in his name" [John 20:19-31].

Perhaps there are some people reading this who are experiencing intense doubt. The doubts that we suffer at various times of our lives, are not all that bad after all. The experience of doubt can lead us to take a more determined step into faith. No, not a step, a leap, a leap into the arms of the Lord who loves us with all our human limitations, including those that might question his very love. Maybe that is why Pope St. John Paul II declared that the Sunday that we reflect on doubts and faith should also be the Sunday that we recognize the overwhelming Divine Mercy of the Lord.

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

**WISE WORDS:**

A leader is a dealer of hope. Inspire others to keep going, share a positive vision for the road ahead. But most of all believe in others more than they believe in themselves.



**OUR DOUBTS AND HIS MERCY:**

John's Gospel presents us with "Doubting Thomas" and our annual reflection on doubts and faith [John 20:19-31]. First of all, in this context, I am not considering faith as a compendium of dogmas, but faith as the belief in the very basis of our religion. By this I mean the core, the fundamentals — belief in God's existence, belief in the Trinity, belief in the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, belief in the spiritual and our sharing in the spiritual, belief in the presence of God in the Word of Scripture and in the Sacraments, belief in our salvation by the Lord, belief in the presence of the Spirit of the Father and the Son in the teaching of the Catholic Church.

A young lady who had become a Catholic in high school and was in college once asked me: "Why does the priest say during Mass: 'The Mystery of Faith' and the people respond with an acclamation that includes some of the articles of our faith?" The young woman was stuck on the word mystery. Perhaps she had only seen that word used in the context of a murder mystery like an Agatha Christi whodunit. I explained to her that when we use the term mystery at Mass we are referring to that which we believe that is beyond our minds' grasp.

In the early Church, the sacraments were called the mysteries. All of us would be quick to affirm the mystery of faith. Still, that does not mean that we do not go through periods of doubt. It is quite normal for people to doubt. In fact, it is part of the human condition. It is normal for people to question themselves. It is normal for people to question the depth of their faith, or even if they have any faith at all.

I really do not believe that a person with doubts has lost faith. He or she is rather searching for faith. Maybe we can understand this better if we consider two of the ways that doubt enters our lives. First of all, most of us entered into periods of doubt as we grew up. Many times, we were quite vocal about this. A pre-teen or teen might question a religion teacher: "How do I know that God exists?" "How do I know that all this Jesus stuff isn't just made up by a bunch of people who want other people to give them money?" Those questions, often asked with the lack of tact that only a young person can get away with, are not as confrontational as they might seem. Consider the young person's perspective, or consider our own perspective when we were young. We had experienced religion in a story-telling manner, or whatever way that it could be possible to communicate the faith to children. Our most intense lessons came when we prepared for First Communion, at the ripe old age of 7 or 8.



But, at 13 or 14 — perhaps in confirmation class — we were looking for ideas that relate to our growing intellectual capacities. In school, we had graduated from arithmetic to algebra, but in our understanding of our faith, we were still somewhere around 8 years old. The vast majority of the time teenagers who challenge the faith are not really questioning faith, but questioning a childish understanding of faith. That is why experiences like youth ministry are so important to their faith life. They can now relate to the faith according to their level of maturity. Still, even with the greatest of programs, a teenager — as well as all of us — must be willing to take a leap of faith and recognize within himself or herself that there are things that a person will never know and understand because they are too great for anyone to comprehend — things like the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ.

The prayer that all of us must make — teens and adults — is simply: I trust in God, even when there are things within me that want to doubt. I can distinctly remember going through teenage doubts and finally saying: "What the Church teaches, I believe. End of story."

There is another type of doubt that is far more difficult to deal with. That is the doubt that enters our lives when things go wrong, very wrong. It is one thing to be a person of faith when all is wonderful in our lives. It is another thing to have faith when a loved one gets sick or dies, or when we are afflicted

**FEAST OF DAZZLING LIGHT:**

"The true division of humanity," Victor Hugo wrote in *Les Miserables*, "is between those who live in light and those who live in darkness." Victor Hugo, it seems, understood Easter.

We love to think of Easter as the feast of dazzling light. We get up on Easter Sunday morning knowing that the sorrow of Good Friday is finally ended — that the pain of the cross has been compensated for by a burst of brilliant victory from the gates of the grave; that Jesus is vindicated; that the faith of the disciples is confirmed for all to see; and that everyone lived happily ever after.

We love fairy tales. Unfortunately, Easter is not one of them.

On the contrary, Easter is raw reality. Easter stands in stark witness, not to the meaning of death, but to the meaning of what it is to go on despite death, in the face of death — because of death. To celebrate Easter means to stand in the light of the empty tomb and decide what to do next. Until we come to realize that, we stand to misread the meaning, not simply of the Easter gospel, but of our own lives. We miss the point. We make Easter an historical event rather than a life-changing commitment. We fail to realize that Easter demands as much of us now as it did of the apostles then.



Easter is the feast that gives meaning to life. It is the feast that never ends. After Easter, the tomb stands open for all of us to enter. If Jesus is risen, then you and I have no choice but to go into the tomb, put on the leftover garments ourselves, and follow Jesus back to Galilee where the poor cry for food and cripples cry to be taken to the pool and the blind wait for the spittle on their eyes to dry. All the fidelity in the world will not substitute for leaving the tomb and beginning the journey all over again. Today. Every day. Always.

That's what Easter is really about. It is the "division of humanity" to which Hugo refers in his dramatic rendering of the struggle between light and dark. Yes, Easter is about dazzling light — but only if it shines through us.

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

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

<b>Monday:</b>	Isaiah 7:10-14, Hebrews 10:4-10, Luke 1:26-38
<b>Tuesday:</b>	Acts 4:32-37, John 3:7-15
<b>Wednesday:</b>	Acts 5:17-26, John 3:16-21
<b>Thursday:</b>	Acts 5:27-33, John 3:31-36
<b>Friday:</b>	Acts 5:34-42, John 6:1-15
<b>Saturday:</b>	Acts 6:1-7, John 6:16-21
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Week in Easter:</b>	Acts 3:13-19, 1 John 2:1-15, Luke 24:35-48

**PRAYER:**

Pray with great confidence — with confidence based on the goodness and infinite generosity of God and upon the promises of Jesus Christ. God is a spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those who pray.

—St. Louis De Montfort

## IS HE THERE? COMMUNICATING WITH GOD:

As of writing this article, I'm in second semester of college away from home. While I realize that my journey to receive higher education may still be young, I can honestly say that I've learned a lot over one semester's worth of time. From learning about the scientific miracle that are the pods that you put into a washing machine, or that pizza isn't a healthy option for breakfast, college is definitely a learning experience.

Besides laundry lessons and dietary discoveries, one of the more profound things that I've learned while being in college was actually a lesson in one of my communications classes. While reading one of my textbooks, the author talked about the major difference between two words that I thought were simple synonyms for each other — hearing and listening.

This amazing textbook made the point that, while the two words are commonly used for the same thing, the actual definitions of the two tell a different story. On the one hand, hearing is defined as “the vibration of sound waves on the eardrums and the firing of electrochemical impulses to the brain.” So, as long as you have your sense of hearing, you are always hearing. On the other hand, listening is defined as “paying close attention to, and making sense of, what we hear.”

Hearing is almost a given, but whether or not we listen is a different question. For example, if you've ever been telling someone a story and halfway through it the person whom you are telling it to zones out, it's not like their brain couldn't receive the words that were said. Their brain just lost concentration on what was being said, so whatever information that was being said becomes white noise.

The difference between hearing and listening is easy to understand. We communicate with other people every day. Communication is key to any relationship. And for that reason, this idea of hearing versus listening should also be applied to our most important relationship — our prayer life with God.

God doesn't just hear us — He listens. And we need to start to listen to God too!

One of the most common things that I've heard people struggle with in prayer — myself included — is that it doesn't really feel like the “conversation with God” what we want it to be. Oftentimes, prayer can feel very one-sided — does God really hear me? There have been points in my life where prayer felt like I was on the phone with God and He fell asleep on me as soon as I called. I had no idea what God wanted in my life. It felt like when I was talking to God; he heard me — but never listened to me!

Nothing could be further from the truth. After talking to others about this problem, someone told me that even though it may not be easy to see, God is still looking over us. The quote that they told me was: “if we believe that the sun exists when it's night time, why do we think God doesn't care when things might be rough in our lives?” Let me put it this way — we are God's children, and He is the parent that wants to help us. God listens to us intentionally and feels every emotion that we do. He's happy when we laugh, and when we're sad, He cries along with us. He loves His children too much to simply ignore them. God did not have to send down His son to save us, yet he did anyways because He loves us. Even though it might be hard to see sometimes, God is pulling the strings behind the scenes in order for you and I to live a beautiful and fulfilling life.

So if God listens to us, why does prayer still feel like we're writing letters to a pen-pal who never writes back? God responds to our prayers, but sometimes, we're the ones guilty of hearing but not listening. When things go wrong and the sin hits the fan — pun intended — we might begin to question if God knows what He is doing. It's at these points that we should hear the word of God, and listen to what's being said. God wants us to know that he has an amazing life laid out for you — “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you



hope and a future” [Jeremiah 29:11].

Whenever we wonder about that plan of God, and begin to doubt, St. Paul reassures us that everything will be OK if we simply lift our issues to our listening God — “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” [Philippians 4:6].

Scripture clearly tells us that no matter what we perceive about our world or our God, He is always listening to us. We, as His children, must work on becoming better listeners to everything that He has provided us.

From the Scriptures to the saints, there are countless examples of people who have felt like God simply wasn't listening. A great example of a saint that had these same issues is St. Teresa of Calcutta. She went through extremely long periods of doubt about God — even so far as to think that God wasn't even there sometimes. Instead of turning away from prayer however, she lifted up her struggles to God.

It's this type of thinking that we need to embrace when we think about our prayer life. We simply cannot leave God when our relationship seems tough: we have to lift up those struggles to Him.

All relationships require communication to survive. If a relationship is to truly thrive however, we must work on not simply hearing, but listening, as well. That goes for our human relationships, as well as our spiritual one with our heavenly Father.

There are several ways to pray when things may feel difficult. As mentioned earlier, the saints can be great inspirations for us, but there are many other ways that we can try to keep praying. We can pray along to Scripture, when we can't seem to hear anything from God, we can lean on the words that God has spoken.

It's hard to be happy with a relationship where it feels like you're the only one trying, and the other isn't listening. But know that, not only does God listen to your cries, He is desperately trying for you to listen to His love.

—taken from the writings of Dillon Duke, a college student.

## LIFE TEEN and EDGE:

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



LIFE TEEN

website — [lifeteen.com](http://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 20<sup>th</sup>:

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.