

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

**~ A Prayer for New Life ~**

**Radiant and Unfading Wisdom,  
your deep love calls to me.  
I seek you with all my heart.  
Hasten to make yourself known.**

**Sit at the gate of my heart.  
Teach me your ways.  
Meet me in my every thought.  
Attune my mind to your perceptions.  
Open all that is closed within me.  
I desire your instruction.  
I long to receive and to share your love.**

**Dance on the path of my life.  
Free me from all that hinders.  
Deepen all that attracts me to you.  
As the mystery of my life unfolds  
through the quickly passing years,  
draw my love ever nearer to you.**

**I promise to be awake and vigilant,  
attentive to your voice,  
I will hide no secrets from you.  
Come reveal yourself to me.  
Amen.**

—Joyce Rupp

# 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

**IMPORTANT SCHEDULE CHANGE COMING MAY 29: [one time only]:**

Because of Graduation, we will have a change in the Mass time for the **Saturday, May 25<sup>th</sup>** and **Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup>**. Mass on **Saturday, May 25<sup>th</sup>** will be the **Baccalaureate Mass at 5:00 PM, and will take place in the Athletic Center.** Mass on **Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup>** will be at **9:00 AM.** This is a one time change because of graduation which takes place later that morning. Sorry for the inconvenience that this may cause you. It is the only time all year, that Mass times change.

**MOTHER'S DAY:**

Mother's Day this year is next Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup>. We will be honoring all our Mothers, step-mothers, grandmothers and God mothers with a special blessing. In addition, we will begin Mass with a "May Crowning" of Mary, either in our shrine out in front of the chapel, or, if it rains, in the chapel itself. What a blessing motherhood is — not just the physical "giving birth," but the nurturing and special love that mothering involves. Share this time with all those who have shared this beautiful treasure of God. Offer a prayer for our mothers — today and everyday.

**WOMEN'S EVENING OF RETREAT — TUES. MAY 7:**

**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.** There is no cost for the evening, but we are accepting free will offerings to offset the cost for refreshments. 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 at (440) 473-3560 or by email at: [szaniszl@gilmour.org](mailto:szaniszl@gilmour.org)** Please RSVP by this Sunday, May 5<sup>th</sup>.

**PLAY BALL!**

Our Lady Chapel is going back to Classic Park to watch the Lake County Captains. Join us on **Friday, June 14<sup>th</sup>** as the Captains take on the Fort Wayne Tin Caps. Game time is **7:00 PM** and that's when our picnic dinner will be served. While our menu has not been determined yet, last year it included hamburgers, barbecued chicken, as well as side dishes, chips, cookies and beverages. The meal will be available until 8:30 PM. **Cost is \$35 per person and includes the buffet and a box seat ticket. The game will be followed by fireworks and a faith witness by members of the Captains team. The last day to sign up will be Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup>.**

**FAITH EDUCATION: FINAL CLASS MEETING**

**Our final Faith Education class will be this Sunday, May 5.** We would like to thank our children and parents for making this another successful year of Faith Education. **Faith Education normally meets from 8:45—9:45 AM on Sunday mornings. This is followed by Mass in Our Lady Chapel at 10 AM.** If you would like to register your child for next fall's Faith Education program, please check the Bulletin in August. We will be posting information on next school year's classes. If you have any questions, please contact Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560]. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.

**THE CALL:**

Be a lamp or a lifeboat or a ladder. Help someone's soul heal. Walk out of your house like a shepherd.

—Rumi

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Bernard Zofcin
- For Alida Macor, sister of Father Nicholas Ayo, C.S.C.
- For Susan Phalen, the sister of Father John Phalen, C.S.C.
- For Pam Spicer, wife of former Gilmour football coach, Bob Spicer.
- For Daniel Cavoli.
- For Loretta Peterson, mother of Christopher ['69], Mark ['70] and Guy ['73] Peterson
- For Reginald Bryant
- For Julia Angeles, mother of Thomas ['84], Kevin ['87], and Catherine ['89] Angeles

**A QUESTION FOR YOU:**

A few weeks ago, we observed "Earth Day". Do you remember? How often do you pray for the earth, for animals, plants, or other parts of nature? Perhaps it is more than coincidence that we created "Earth Day" at the same time of the year that the church used to process through the fields praying and singing in late April. For centuries these days were called: "Rogation Days" — and of course they reflected the largely agrarian Christian world of that time. For three days the church prayed for the earth, the crops, the fields, streams, and the animals. Surely they were also praying for good weather for their crops, and they knew the immediate and specific connection between planting and harvesting — there was no packaged food yet. When you pray for something, you are offering it respect and acknowledging its dignity and importance in the great cycle of life. How sad that many of us now suffer from "NDD" — Nature Deficit Disorder — and do not even know where our food comes from or the names of many plants, trees, foods, and animals that are keeping us alive and keeping the world beautiful and balanced. Maybe all days deserve to be Earth Days, or Rogation Days of

**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.

**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].

**FAITH AND GIVING:**

Dear brothers and sisters, a faith without giving, a faith without gratuitousness is an incomplete faith. It is a weak faith, a faith that is ill. We could compare it to rich and nourishing food that nonetheless lacks flavor, or a more or less well-played game, but without a goal: no, it isn't good, it lacks "salt". A faith without giving, without gratuitousness, without works of charity, makes us sad in the end: just like that man who returned home "sorrowful" with a fallen countenance, even though he had been looked upon with love by Jesus in person."

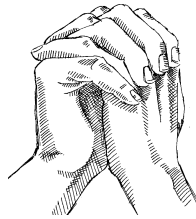
—Pope Francis

**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 seriously 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 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 Sister Colette Livingston, O.S.U., who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Nada Kucmanic, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Patty Szaniszlo, 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.
- For Father Tom Lemos, C.S.C., who is seriously ill.
- For Father Dick Potthast, C.S.C., who is undergoing medical testing.
- For Father Jim McDonald, C.S.C., who is undergoing rehab following multiple surgeries for a broken ankle.
- For Jackie and Dale Rusnik, aunt and uncle of 6th grader, Jakub Bennish, who is undergoing treatment for various medical issues.



**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas.
- For an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine.
- For an end to violence as a means to resolve differences.
- For 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.

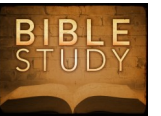
**REMEMBER:**

Confession is not about ourselves and our sins, but about God and his mercy.

—Pope Francis

**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, MAY 8<sup>th</sup>:**

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, May 8<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: Pentecost. What does it mean?**

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, May 5: 6 <sup>th</sup> Week in Easter	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, May 6:	NO MASS
Tuesday, May 7:	6:00 PM [women’s retreat]
Wednesday, May 8:	NO MASS
Thursday, May 9:	NO MASS
Friday, May 10:	NO MASS
Saturday, May 11: Vigil of the Ascension of Jesus	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, May 12: Ascension of Jesus	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — MAY 18<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. Please join us for a great experience.

**MAKE YOUR PLANS NOW:**

Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning. —Gloria Steinem

**REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:**

It might be easy for us to wonder why it took so long for Peter to understand that the Gospel is for “every nation” — namely, for the Gentiles as well as the Jews [see Acts 10:25-48]. However, I think I understand how he felt. God may have gotten his head straightened out, but he was simply not used to being in the midst of Gentiles, and it must have made him fairly uncomfortable. Customs and experiences can be hard to overcome. I will never forget an experience in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade when I asked my parents if my friend, Don, could stay overnight at our house one Friday night. No problem; we were in a new town and they were happy I had made a friend. Years later they told me how shocked they were initially when Don came in the house. You see, Don has the most beautiful black skin. They had never lived around African-Americans, and had never had one in their house. They had taught their children to treat all people with respect, but they simply didn’t have any experience with people of other races. It didn’t take them long though to love Don and his older brother, Lionel. They spent hours at our place and became almost like family. So, maybe we can understand Peter and the other Jews with him who hesitated when it came to going into Cornelius’ house — God was stretching them and that can be painful.

The Feast of Pentecost is quickly approaching. There begins a slight shift in theme as we look forward to the graces of Pentecost. We hear of God’s universal love which is not given merely to certain favorites, but is offered beyond national and ethnic boundaries. God’s love flows like a fountain — with water tumbling indiscriminately down all sides. In John’s Gospel, Jesus is asking his closest friends to continue the mission of his fountaining love [John 15:9-17]. There is much to grasp and reflect upon. God’s love for us is overwhelming, and we must fountain out that love beyond our comfortable boundaries. “Loving one another” means more than just agreeing with the statement in principle; it means more than loving those who will receive our love and those who can return it to us abundantly. Our love for others must be the spirit of Jesus that we have all received — and the courage to live and give it out.

Imagine, if you will, Jesus at the Last Supper. He has just finished the meal, and he is walking around the room from one disciple to another. He stops in front of each disciple, looks each one in the eye, and speaks to them from the depth of his heart. There is urgency in his voice, and a tone of intimate love. Judas has been long gone, but to those who remain, Jesus almost begs them to stay close to each other in love. Then he gets to you. He looks you in the eye — penetrating to the depth of your soul — and he whispers: “You did not choose me. No, I chose you and appointed you to go forth and bear fruit. Your fruit must endure. Then my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is the commandment I give you: Love one another”.

St. Luke in his Book of Acts of the Apostles presents us with a beautiful incident of the Church beginning to expand its borders. Cornelius is a Roman soldier who, while praying devoutly receives a vision in which an angel announces that his prayer and generosity have been accepted by God. Then he is instructed to send for Simon Peter for a conference.

Simon Peter also has a vision in which he is instructed to eat the birds and animals which are appearing on a large sheet dropped down before him. While the menu sounds strange, we need to remember Peter at this time is a most devout Jew and would never eat anything “unclean.” The voice in his vision responds to his religious objection by reminding him that God made everything clean — and Peter has no authority to name birds and animals and anything that God created as profane [Acts 10:25-48].

Meanwhile, the messengers arrive to take Peter back for his conference with the first visionary —

**ALL ARE WELCOME:**

Luke’s Book of Acts of the Apostles narrates the biblical beginning of one of the three basic changes made in Christianity’s first century and a half — the acceptance of Gentiles into the church as Gentiles [Acts 10:25-48]. Originally non-Jews who wished to become disciples of the risen Jesus were expected to first convert to Judaism, and only then convert to Christianity. Since the historical Jesus was a reformer of Judaism, why would a non-Jew want to follow him? Because he had preached his reform in the context of the religion he professed — Judaism — his earliest disciples logically presumed they had to imitate his reforming faith against that same background.

Yet, eventually some of those disciples began to understand more implications of Jesus’ resurrection than they had first recognized. As Paul writes to the Church at Galatia, the risen Jesus was quite different from the historical Jesus. Whereas the latter was a Jew, the former had become both Jew and Gentile. Neither was this “new creation” restricted to being a slave or a free person; not even to being a man or woman [see Galatians 3]. For “progressive” Christians like Paul, that meant more than just free — Jewish men could become other Christs.

Though this theology was widely accepted by the time Luke composes Acts in the mid-80’s, Luke paints a picture of a gradual process which leads up to it. First, “heretical Jews” — Samaritans — are permitted to become Jesus’ followers [Acts 6]. Next, Philip baptizes a Gentile convert to Judaism — the Ethiopian eunuch [Acts 8]. Finally, Cornelius, simply a “God fearing” Gentile, and his family are evangelized and baptized by Peter.

Of course, once Gentiles as Gentiles are accepted as full partners in the faith, most of Jesus’ followers begin to ignore the 613 laws of Moses to which first century Jews were committed. Though Matthew’s Jesus — addressing the evangelist’s Jewish/Christian community — insists his disciples still keep each of those 613 precepts, our Christian biblical authors normally revolve their morality around love. It’s not only the one act that unites Jewish and Gentile Christians, it’s the one principle on which the historical Jesus based his reform.

Love of others is at the heart of Jesus’ faith. No one expresses this principle better than John’s Jesus [John 15:9-17] — “This is my commandment, love one another as I love you.” And should anyone have any doubt about what such love entails, Jesus continues: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

The author of John’s first letter insightfully expands Jesus’ command — “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love” [1 John 4:7-10]. The writer is convinced that all this love stuff actually began with God — “In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.”

Though Luke’s Peter is motivated to baptize Cornelius both because of a vision from God and the Spirit’s gifts which come down upon the centurion and his family, most commentators on the subject believe love might have historically played a bigger role in Gentile conversions than is mentioned in the Acts narrative.

As I’ve mentioned before, one of my favorite “religious” posters is the Glenmary one depicting an African-American young boy wearing tattered, hand-me-down clothes, standing in front of a ramshackle house. The caption reads: “God made me. God don’t make junk.”

If we regard someone as incapable of becoming another Christ, I’m afraid we’re regarding him/her as junk. Our sacred authors were convinced that God never created any junk. It just takes some of his/her creatures a little while to figure that out.

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

**IMMERSED IN GOD’S LOVE:**

St. Luke gives us an account of the first Gentile convert to Christianity — Cornelius the Centurion [Acts 10:25-48]. Cornelius had a vision of an Angel who told him that his good deeds had been recognized by God, and that he should send his men to bring Simon Peter to him. At more or less the same time Peter himself had a dream in which he saw a big sheet being let down from heaven containing many unclean animals, and he was told by a voice from heaven to kill and eat them. As a well brought-up Jew, Peter did not want to eat anything unclean, but he was told by the voice three times that nothing made by God was unclean, and to kill and eat the animals. By this he came to understand that the Word of God was intended not only for the Jews, but for the Gentiles too. Peter therefore went with the men Cornelius had sent. The Holy Spirit was poured out on them all and Peter baptized Cornelius and his entire household.

This is a wonderful story and it shows how the newly born Church was guided by the Holy Spirit to fulfill its mission in accordance with God’s will. And it is clear that it is God’s will that the Church is intended for everyone in the world — and not just for the Jewish people. This is something that we all have to keep always before us — realizing that the membership of the Church can never exclude anyone who believes. It can never be confined to an exclusive group. We have to always guard ourselves from thinking that this or that person or group is unworthy of being a Christian.

The writings of John are all about love [1 John 4:7-10 and John 15:9-17]. John exhorts us to place love at the very center of our lives, and to make it our main motivating force. He tells us that love originates in God, and that anyone who embraces God embraces love. He also points out that when we fail to love others, we betray a lack of belief in God. St John says: “Anyone who fails to love can never have known God.” This really puts our belief in God to the test, for it means that we can never separate our beliefs from our actions. When we discover hate in our hearts, we ought to realize that we are getting into dangerous territory, and that we are already putting our faith in God in jeopardy.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus is speaking to his disciples in the long discourse he gave at the Last Supper. After telling them about the True Vine [5<sup>th</sup> Week in Easter], Jesus moves on to tell them about how he is the expression of the Father’s love for us all. He gives us the famous command to love — “This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.”

In Old Testament times, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments for his Chosen People. But these were very prescriptive — the “do this, don’t do that” model. But here in the new dispensation all the old commandments are reduced to this one new commandment — the command to love. This new commandment actually encapsulates all the old ones. But even more importantly, this new commandment makes it very clear that love is the underlying principle by which God wants us to live our lives.

The famous early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Catholic intellectual, Hilaire Belloc, fell in love with an American girl whom he met in a London restaurant. After a few days trying unsuccessfully to woo her, she informed him that she was leaving for America the very next day. She further told him that she was going to fulfill her long term wish to enter an enclosed convent on her return to California. The girl’s rich mother wouldn’t let her join the convent until she had taken her on a tour of Europe so that she could see something of the world before taking her vows and entering the cloister.

Belloc was shattered and beside himself with grief at the lovely girl’s departure. He was only a very young man, but he managed to scrape together enough money to buy a passage on the next boat to New York. Without any money — and just relying on his wits — he managed to get himself across America. Often he offered to paint a portrait of a hotel keeper in exchange for a night’s lodgings.

When Belloc eventually arrived in California, he managed to track down the poor girl, and to her complete astonishment turned up on her doorstep asking her to marry him. She refused again, but he wouldn’t give up, and in due course managed to woo her away from the convent to be his wife.

This is love; this is passion; this is heroic; this is the kind of love God wants from us.

And so Jesus says to the disciples: “A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.” We often see these words inscribed on war memorials to mark the sacrifice of the lives given by those who have fallen in war. We acknowledge the tremendous sacrifice that these soldiers were willing to make on behalf of others.

16 But when we look around us, we actually discover quite a lot of this sort of thing — we see it in the lives of parents who make huge sacrifices for their children; we see it in the lives of those who dedicate themselves to caring for a partner or a parent or a sick child; we see it in the lives of those who give up a kidney so that someone else does not have to live their lives on a dialysis machine.

As humans we find that we are actually no strangers to sacrifice. In fact, we are surrounded by people,

Cornelius. What is most important here is to understand that Peter and his companions go into Cornelius’ house even though at this time that would be considered a “no-no.” This entire incident, and how it plays out is one of the most significant in scripture for social and religious reasons. As we hear though, God does not play favorites — not even to the holding back on the sending of the Spirit. Peter — finally understanding that the Holy Spirit was moving beyond friendly confines — declares that Cornelius and all in his company should receive Baptism, even as they had themselves. Jesus, through the Spirit is growing wider and deeper.

John’s Gospel is a favorite at weddings — it’s all about loving. And that is true; but there’s more there than that. Love is about laying down one’s life; love is about remaining faithful as God is to us; love is shown in actions and in mutual sharing of all one’s personal gifts — including histories, fears, graces as well as material goods [John 15:9-17].

Loving is a command because we are so selfish. If the elements of loving were so easy and natural to us all, Jesus would not have given a command to do it, and he gives it to his friends twice. If love were easy, Jesus would have probably said: “Keep it up people,” and told them to do something harder perhaps. No, this is the hard one because to love means to lay it all out there. Jesus asks this of us because this is the way he began the reversal from sin and its consequences. Love would continue his growing wider and deeper if we would lay it all out there as he did. For all the songs and poems and movies about love, love still remains as an insult to our selfishness. Jesus does not give his friends a handbook on how to love — rather he gave them three years of his loving forgiveness, caring, and sharing of all he has. He will lay it all out for them on the cross and then give them the Spirit, but for all that, we flounder. Jesus did not give them a weed to chew or potion to drink which would make loving easy. If any of us could come up with something to make his commandment easier, we’d all be rich! One thing is for sure — receiving love from God, and from God through others, seems to be the beginning. We cannot share what we have not first received. Jesus is God’s love made visible and receivable. Like a good secret, once received it just has to be shared.

The most difficult aspect of this greatest of all the commands is to believe that we are “loveable” — and that “God has made me loveable.” For all the songs and poems and movies about love, there is more money and time spent on arranging our outward selves to appear — appear what? Being loveable comes from within where God’s grace plays artist. The beauty then does appear, but radiates outward and cannot be smudged off or wiped away or criticized into disappearance.

When Jesus asks us to love one another, he asks first if we have allowed him to wash our feet, our simple humanity — wash away our shame for being so human. Because we do not achieve our own standard of beauty, we assume that we are too ugly, too much the loser to love sincerely as he invites us to do. So that is the first part of this commandment — that we let him grace us with his Spirit so that we become who we really are, rather than the “false shame” of our failures. Loving is never a perfect experience, but being loved makes living with imperfections faith-filled.

Jesus tells us something important about love; it requires action. God didn’t just say: “I love you”; He did something when he sent Jesus “as expiation for our sins.” You don’t “reveal” love for another with warm feelings and words only — although words are better than nothing. You reveal love by actions — “God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him.”

Love demands concrete action — cooking dinner, taking the dog out, doing the dishes — these are simple things around the house that spell love. These are simple ways to live the love that Jesus is talking about; it calls us to expand our comfort zone and to reach beyond ourselves to find God.

—edited from the writings of George Butterfield and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

**TAKING THE BULL BY THE HORNS:**

Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.

—Barack Obama

## WHAT KIND OF GOD DO YOU HAVE?

One of my favorite passages in all of Sacred Scripture is contained in John's Gospel where we find Jesus saying: "I no longer call you slaves, I call you friends" [John 15:9-17]. Jesus is saying something very beautiful in those words — something really wonderful about the humility of God — making us His friends.

Some people prefer a God who is a sort of benevolent Emperor — a sort of plantation owner who provides for us as one would provide for his slaves. Other people want a God who gives clear laws, rules, and regulations — one who sets our boundaries for us. Under such a God there are no hard decisions to make; no real thought given to the most creative responses we can make in any given situation. Under such a God, all one need do is simply follow the rules. Nevertheless, God continues to insist: "I no longer call you slaves, I call you friends." That puts burdens on us. We have to figure out how to fully respond to Him. Freedom has its burdens, doesn't it? We have to make hard decisions. There are no simplistic solutions to be had.

Too often we neglect the whole reality of friendship in our lives. We take friends for granted. We treat our so-called friendships as we treat all others in our lives, rarely stopping to consider the beauty of a true friend. A deep friendship, however, reveals what God is trying to say to us. But if we take friends for granted, along with their desire to really love us, then we will never really understand the meaning of what God is saying to us. We will never really understand the meaning of the revelation that God is love. For love and friendship are two ways of expressing the same reality.

One cannot be a friend simply because one follows a series of laws, or the rules of etiquette and politeness, or other such formulae. There is no cookbook way to be a good friend, no series of techniques to follow. There is only one way to be a good friend, and that is to love, to give your love to your friend without any strings or conditions attached. For a friendship is not a contractual relationship with a series of quid pro quo obligations. Love, real love, is without limits. It takes us into the mystery of that love is. Love has its reasons the mind knows not of.

Love and friendship are loaded with uncertainties. Part of the bittersweet agony of loving is found precisely in the uncertainties that are involved. There are expectations involved on the part of both parties, and those expectations may be met or not met. But friendship is deeper than expectations. Friendship is there whether or not we experience disappointments, whether or not we feel good. Love and friendship go far beyond feelings. Love and friendship involve decisions, choices, will, and commitment. It is beyond reason.

And so, I would like to bring three points to your attention today, points that are essential to love and friendship:

1. One is ACCEPTANCE. Acceptance doesn't mean approval of anything and everything done by the one you love. Remember that in John's Gospel, Jesus called His apostles "friends" at the Last Supper — only moments before Peter denied Him three times and the rest of them turned and fled. Yet Jesus, knowing what was about to happen, called them His friends. That sort of unconditional acceptance is hard to believe when we encounter it, but it reveals the nature of God in His love for us. Can we live up to that standard and accept the limitations of others even when we don't approve of what they are doing? Loving as God loves isn't easy — but it is beautiful.
2. Another quality of love and friendship is RESPECT. Jesus had a deep respect for the men



fidelity.

10. We need, today more than ever, to bear down on the essentials of respect, charity, and graciousness. Cause never justifies disrespect.
11. We need to work at winning over hearts, not hardening them.

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

## REMAIN IN MY LOVE:

"God shows no partiality." Really? Not even between people who cheat immigrant workers and those who risk their lives for others? What about Vladimir Putin and the Ukrainians, or Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian children? What about ... ? Well, you name them.

This is tough if it is supposed to apply to us. Peter and the early Christians faced this sort of dilemma when "gentiles" — non-Jews, pagans — began to share the same faith as disciples and the Jewish converts. For them as for us, buying into the breadth of God's love may entail more than we might want to give.

Luke set up the incident in the Book of Acts, with two dreams. First, Cornelius, the centurion, dreamt that God wanted him to meet Peter [see Acts 10:1-8]. Peter dreamt of a giant picnic blanket laden with every imaginable kind of food, kosher and non-kosher, lowered before him. He was told to enjoy every variety. Of course, Peter refused the forbidden food until the divine message got through: "What God has made clean, you are not to call profane: [see Acts 10:9-16]. As the dream ended, messengers arrived, inviting Peter to Cornelius' home. We might call this a "providential coincidence."

Coincidental? More like providential. From the very beginning, "providence" called the Christian community to see beyond their own plans to grasp what the Holy Spirit was working in the world. This underlines the humbling truth that the Spirit does not belong to any nation, tongue, denomination or religious tradition. God's Spirit blows in all directions, leading toward the future that God created us for. Our part is to wonder at and appreciate how God's saving power extends to "all the ends of the Earth" [see Psalm 98].

The Book of Acts gives us the real-life story that incarnates the teaching of John's first letter, and Jesus' teaching during the last supper. The New American Bible, reminds us that the First Letter of John is not so much a letter as it is a commentary on the Gospel of John, and a defense of Jesus as truly human and divine. And so, in his letter, John gives us a commentary on Jesus' message of love [1 John 4:7-10].

Jesus' key statement in the gospel of John is his invitation to "remain in my love" [John 15:9-17]. The idea of remaining might sound like a stopping point, but it's really the opposite — dwelling in Christ's love calls us to live more deeply, more passionately, to allow Christ's love to activate everything we do.

Dwelling in Christ's love changes everything. Peter learned this with Cornelius. Harking back to the many times that Jesus went beyond the letter of the law to fulfill its purpose instead, Peter was drawn to allow love to prod him beyond the limits of his religious tradition and into the depths of what faith in Christ could call forth. The result was the joy of unexpected unity and eventually the joy of becoming free from legalities that limit the communion that can happen among very diverse people who share the same hopes.

Accepting Gentiles seems to pale in the light of the divisions we know today — at least the Gentiles desired to know Christ. But what about those we believe are destroying life? People in whom we do not recognize any genuine faith?

This is where "remain in my love" becomes the key to our transformation. When Christ's kind of love feels impossible, perhaps a solution can be found in the first three of the 12 steps: to admit that we are powerless to love like Christ, to believe that God's grace can work wonders in us, and to invite God to accomplish in us what we cannot. Then, as people begotten by God, we too can believe what Gabriel told Mary: "For God, nothing is impossible" [Luke 1:37]. Our "new possible" even includes loving those we would rather despise. And believe it or not, Christ promises it will bring us fullness of joy!

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

**THE NEW EVANGELIZATION:**

New Evangelization has arrived. It first came on the scene about 15 or so years ago. Pope Benedict even called a Synod to gather in Rome to articulate a vision and strategy for such an endeavor. What is meant by New Evangelization? In simple terms: Millions of people — particularly in the Western world — are Christian in name, come from Christian backgrounds, are familiar with Christianity, believe that they know and understand Christianity, but no longer practice that faith in a meaningful way. They've heard of Christ and the Gospel — even though they may be overrating themselves in their belief that they know and understand what these mean. No matter. Whatever their shortcomings in understanding a faith that they no longer practice, they believe that they've already been evangelized and that their non-practice is an examined decision. Their attitude toward Christianity, in essence, is: I know what it is. I've tried it. And it's not for me!

And so it no longer makes sense to speak of trying to evangelize such persons in the same way as we intend that term when we are speaking of taking the Gospel to someone for the first time. It's more accurate precisely to speak of a new evangelization — of an attempt to take the Gospel to individuals and to a culture that have already largely been shaped by it, are in a sense over-familiar with it, but haven't really in fact examined it. The new evangelization tries to take the Gospel to persons who are already Christian but are no longer practicing as Christians.

How to do that? How do we make the Gospel fresh for those for whom it has become stale? How do we, as G. K. Chesterton put it, help people to look at the familiar until it looks unfamiliar again? How do we try to Christianize someone who is already Christian?

There are no simple answers. It's not as if we haven't already been trying to do that for more than a generation. Anxious parents have been trying to do this with their children. Anxious pastors have been trying to do that with their parishioners. Anxious bishops have been trying to do that with their dioceses. Anxious spiritual writers — including this one — have been trying to do that with their readership. And an anxious church as a whole has been trying to do that with the world. What more might we be doing?

My own view is that we are in for a long, uphill struggle — one that demands faith in the power and truth of what we believe in, and a long, difficult patience. Christ, the faith, and the church will survive — they always do. The stone always eventually rolls away from the tomb and Christ always eventually re-emerges, but we too must do our parts. What are those parts? What is the vision that we need as we try to reach out to evangelize the already evangelized? Here are the principles involved:

1. We need to clearly name this task, recognize its urgency, and center ourselves in Jesus' final mandate to go out to the whole world and make disciples [see Matthew 28].
2. We need work at trying to re-inflate the romantic imagination of our faith. We have been better recently at fanning the flames of our theological imagination, but we've struggled mightily to get people to fall in love with the faith.
3. We need to emphasize both catechesis and theology. We need to focus both on those who are trying to learn the essentials of their faith, and those who are trying to make intellectual sense of their faith.
4. We need a multiplicity of approaches. No one approach reaches everyone. People go where they are fed.
5. We need to appeal to the idealism of people — particularly that of the young. We need to win people over by linking the Gospel to all that's best inside them, to let the beauty of the Gospel speak to the beauty inside of people.
6. We need to evangelize beyond any ideology of the right or the left. We need to move beyond the categories of liberal and conservative to the categories of love, beauty, and truth.
7. We need to remain widely "Catholic" in our approach. We are not trying to get people to join some small, lean, purist, sectarian group, but to enter a house with many rooms.
8. We need to preach both the freedom of the Gospel and its call for an adult maturity. We need to resist preaching a Gospel that threatens or belittles, even as we preach a Gospel that asks for free and mature obedience.
9. We need today — in an age of instability and too-frequent betrayal — to give a special witness to

and women who were His friends — the ones whom He loved. Think of the woman caught in the act of adultery. Think of the Samaritan women who had five husbands. Think of Matthew — the hated tax collector for the Romans. Think of Zacchaeus — the chief tax collector in Jericho who climbed a tree in order to see Jesus. Think of all of the sinners and outcasts who surrounded Jesus with whom He ate and associated Himself. Even though Jesus did not approve of all they did, He nevertheless respected them. We should remember that the Latin word from which "respect" is "respicere", meaning "to look again." In other words, to look deeper.

3. The third quality is that of HONESTY. Friends are totally open to each other. They reveal everything about themselves. Jesus revealed everything about His Father. He said to His apostles: "I call you friends because I have made known to you everything about my Father." There was no holding back, nothing kept hidden. Jesus gave all of Himself for us to see, hanging in nakedness on His cross, totally exposed in the final moment of His greatest gift to us. Remember how Pope John Paul II died? He didn't hide his condition, his sickness, or his suffering from us. It wasn't pretty, yet He let us see everything as he faded away and died.

Jesus told us: "No greater love does anyone have than to lay down their life for their friends." There's that word again — "friends". Friendship is a beautiful thing. The friendship of God is an infinitely beautiful and marvelously mysterious gift He has given us. In deep humility and in sacrifice God has gone to a terrific amount of trouble in order to give Himself to you and me in the love of friendship. Can we accept that? Have you accepted that?

In our minds we can make God out to be anything we fancy. We can let our emotions, fears, guilt, and anxieties shape our attitudes toward Him. We can try to make God into our own image and likeness. We can try to turn Him into a cartoon character in order to avoid taking Him seriously. But eventually we are going to have to face up to the reality of what He says about Himself and how He has chosen to relate to us: "I no longer call you slaves, I call you friends."

Some questions now face us. How do I regard friendship? How do I treat the friends who are in my life? Do I allow God to be my Friend with all of the acceptance, respect, and honesty that's involved in being a true friend? It's a challenge. Knowing that it is a challenge Jesus sends us the One we need, the One who can empower us and equip us to meet the challenge, the Holy Spirit. He is our Advocate. He is the One who inspires us and counsels us. If we give Him time and attention we can truly follow in the way, the truth, and the life of Jesus, Jesus who has risen from the dead and overcome the worst that the Evil One can throw at us.

God offers, we respond. And if we respond to God's life-giving Spirit then the power of Christ's love will conquer all, and we will be the persons God created us to be.

—taken from the writings of Father Charles Irvin, which appears on the internet

**NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:**

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

**PERFECT:**

Wake at dawn with a winged heart and give thanks for another day of loving.

—Kahlil Gibran

**LOVE and LEISURE:**

The Scripture Readings for this 6<sup>th</sup> Week in Easter are so filled with mention of love that it might surprise you that what I want to talk about is leisure. But love and leisure are closely connected. I don't know if you can recall your earliest memory in life. I can.

I think I was about three years old — perhaps younger. It's hard to tell. But I certainly was old enough to be able to know my way around our house, to move from one room into another in the ordinary course of play in which a three-year-old would routinely engage. I remember one day entering into my parent's bedroom. I had done that hundreds of times before. But this day as I walked in through the door, I was stopped in my tracks. There was a beam of sunlight coming in through the window at a particular angle which allowed it to illuminate all the dust particles that were within it. The effect was dazzling — a beam of light in which millions of luminous specks were slowly rotating. I stood looking at that apparition for the longest time. I had never seen anything like it. After a few minutes I was drawn to it and I passed my hand through the beam. The dust particles made way for my fingers, swirling like currents in a stream. I played with that sunbeam until it disappeared with the passing of the sun. It was my first experience of wonder.

Wonder is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we use the word “awe” to name it. Awe takes place when beauty or peace or an unexpected freshness pulls us up and somehow elevates us in a moment of amazement. Awe moves us out of our ordinary lives into the eternal, if only for a few moments. But in those few moments we come about as close as we can to knowing — not with just our head but with our whole being — the presence of God. You see, awe and love are connected. They are connected because in those elevated moments of wonder, we know that the thing we behold — and indeed ourselves — have been created by a God who loves us. In those moments we understand what it means to say God is love, and why Jesus commands us to remain in the love of God always.

Now the practical outcome of this is we need wonder in our lives. We require it. Without it, life becomes simply a matter of duty and achievement. Without wonder, our needs and our requirements fill up every minute of our calendars. Without it, God becomes a word, a concept and our lives become empty. Now all of us at certain moments face a wonder that is inescapable. When we hold a newly born child or grandchild in our arms for the first time, when we stand on the rim of the Grand Canyon, when the purples and yellows and oranges of a sunset rivet our eyes and refuse to let go. In circumstances such as these, only people with hearts of stone remain preoccupied with themselves. But we need wonder more frequently than these rare dramatic moments. We need wonder on a regular basis. So how do we find it?

We find wonder through leisure. It is very important to understand what leisure is. Leisure is not the same thing as entertainment. Entertainment consists of the things we can schedule — a concert, a ballgame, a party, a vacation. But leisure is the ability, a habit of the heart, that allows us to see in those things and in all things, the beauty of creation and the presence of God. Leisure is the attitude that tells us it is not a waste to stop and gaze on a daffodil, or to sit quietly for a few minutes and listen to the music of soft falling rain. Leisure tells us that it is important to recognize the beauty of our spouse's smile, and to relish the smell of the garlic in our grandmother's marinara. Leisure says that there is a high priority to finding a few idle moments in even the busiest of days in which we can simply notice the beauty that surrounds us. The time we take to take that beauty in is not a distraction from life, but actually delving into the very heart of living. It is in that moment that we touch the God whose life invigorates all things.



difficulties. The other teen needs an ear that understands. The first teen would much rather be listening to music, or playing video games, but has no choice but to be present for the suffering friend. Christianity demands it. A retiree spends a few hours each day with an elderly neighbor. He'd rather be fishing or golfing, but he has no choice but to visit Christ's presence in the homebound. An auto mechanic repairs a traveling family's car after the garage's hours so that the poor folks can get on the road and get their kids to bed. He would rather be with his own family, but he is a Christian — he has no choice. And on and on. Millions of little routine daily sacrifices make the greatest life there ever was a reality in our world. Love, the true love of Jesus, imposes limits on us. Love is sacrificial. When we look at the cross, we realize the life that we have been chosen to lead. We have been chosen to make Jesus' life a reality. And He died for others.

One last story. It is just a story — not in scripture — but it gets the point across. It is the story of how the devil tried to sneak into heaven. The legend goes that just before dawn on Easter Sunday, the devil dressed up as the Risen Lord. He had his fallen angels accompany him, all dressed as angels of light. As he approached the gates of heaven, he and his mob cried out the words of Psalm 24: “Lift up your heads, O gates of Heaven. Rise up you ancient portals, that the King of Glory might enter.” The real angels looked down at whom they thought was their King returning in triumph from the dead. So they shouted back in joy the next words of that psalm: “Who is the King of Glory?” Then the devil then made a fatal mistake. He opened his arms, spread his palms and declared: “I am the King of Glory.” He did himself in. The angels immediately slammed shut the gates of heaven. They knew this was not the Lord. Do you know how? They saw that there were no marks of the nails in his palms. He had no wounds of love. He was obviously an imposter. To put it very simply. If we have been chosen by Christ, and we have, then we have to accept His way of life, the way of limits, the way of sacrificial love.

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

**ASKING JESUS:**

Our live in Christ comes to us through the sacraments and through listening to Jesus. That listening takes place in daily walk with him. The Scripture Readings for this 6<sup>th</sup> Week in Easter now take this a stop further — Jesus tells us we must ask: “I will ask the Father” [John 14:15-21]. If Jesus needs to ask the Father, how much more you and me? We come to God by asking.

Some of you have learned the TARP method of prayer. The first two letters — T & A — refer to thanking and asking. The latter two letters deal with reparation and praise. If we did nothing more than thank and ask, that would be a pretty good prayer.

Sometimes we fear asking. Maybe we are like the young man who fears asking his girl to marry him — she might say no or laugh. But Jesus tells us to ask and we will receive, to seek and we will find, to knock and the door will be opened [see Matthew 7:7]. I remember once facing financial difficulties. It seemed like my parish was sinking — and me with it. Someone suggested the Infant of Prague novena. I did the nine days of prayer and received an impressive answer. I didn't get adopted by Bill Gates, but Jesus did bring the relief I was looking for. Today I have the Infant of Prague on the top shelf of my office. The Child Jesus reminds me: Ask and you shall receive — of course, start with gratitude. Acknowledge what God has already given you, then place your most pressing needs before him. And don't forget others who may be in more distress than you.

To ask involves trust. Remember the example of Jesus. He tells us he will ask the Father and the Father will give us the greatest gift. This gift is essential to Life in Christ. Today consider that asking will increase your trust. Put your most pressing need before Jesus. Ask and you will receive.

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





**LOVE — A CHOICE THAT DEMANDS SACRIFICE:**

Love, love, love, love, love. It seems that we hear this word over and over. Bill loves Sue; Sue loves Fred; etc. Every sitcom is loaded with people who fall in and out of love. We hear about married people breaking up, and we wonder where their love went. Then we come to Church, and again we hear about love. But it is not all the same.

True love is a choice that demands sacrifice. People who fall in and out of love have not made a choice that demands sacrifice — or at least one of them has not. There is always a lot of talk about love when people are getting married. But, sadly, some of them don't see the Lord as the center of their love. So they want weddings with beautiful backgrounds, but not necessarily with the sacrament of marriage. Perhaps they are not ready for true love. Perhaps they are not ready for a choice that demands sacrifice. Perhaps they really do not want Christ's love in their marriage — that costs too much.

The Love of Christ comes with a price. There is sacrifice that we need to make to return the Lord's love. If we have been chosen to work for the Kingdom — and according to John's Gospel [John 15:9-17]: "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit — then our options are limited. If we have put on the baptismal gown of the Lord, we cannot wear the clothes of pagans. This is hard to accept in a society that preaches endless choices — a society that caters to infantile fantasies of no rules and no limits to life. We have to come to the realization that because we have been chosen, we have to have rules for a way of life that is truly Christian. We have to deny our infantile desires for the infinitely greater good of the Kingdom of God. Some stories and examples may help. A young boy, fourteen years old, gets his first after school job working in his grandfather's little store. After a few months, his grandfather felt confident that the boy could be left to handle the store alone for brief periods of time. The store was in a quiet neighborhood, and there really were not many people around in the afternoon. But during one of the few times when the boy was alone, the store was robbed. And the boy was shot to death. A few days later the robbers were captured.

That was the same day as the boy's funeral. A news reporter interviewed the grandfather and told him that they police caught the murderers. Then the police officer asked the grandfather if he wanted the men to receive capital punishment. The grandfather looked shocked at the question: "I cannot wish that. I am a Christian, I am not permitted revenge" Christianity imposes limits. You are aware that Blessed Mother Theresa was often asked why she spent so much time and energy helping people who were going to die anyway — and most of them not even Christian. Her answer was that she had no choice. She was a Christian, committed to serving Jesus, and Christ identified with the poorest of the poor.

You may not have heard the story of Princess Alice — the second daughter of Queen Victoria of England. The princess married and had a child, a baby boy. When the child was four, he came down with a terrible disease at the time called "black diphtheria". It was highly contagious; and there was no cure and no hope. The doctors and nurses told the princess that she had to stay away from her son. Her own health was frail. One day as she stood at the door of her little boy's room, she heard him whispering to a nurse: "Why doesn't my Mommy hold me and kiss me anymore"

That was more than Princess Alice could bear. She then did what any loving mother would do — she ran to her son's bed, hugged him and kissed him. She had no choice. She had to show her love. He needed her. Within weeks she came down with the sickness. Both were buried together. The choice of love demands that we accept limitations on our lives and even pain and suffering in order to love as Jesus loved. Parents respond to their baby's cries in the middle of the night. They have no choice if they really love their child. But that choice takes sacrifice.

This is the meaning of true love. Look at your Moms and Dads. Look at the sacrifices each makes for the other. That is how they make love to each other. In a true marriage, marital love is infinitely more than the physical expression of that love. A teenager listens to a friend's story of family



Wonder is a gift of the Holy Spirit, a necessary gift if we are to appreciate the presence of God in all created things. That is why the gospel today calls us to an attitude of leisure — an attitude that allows us to value the importance of wonder and to create a space in which we can experience it. Doing so is not optional or incidental. It is essential because every time we stand in awe, we understand better who we are and to whom we belong. Every time we are caught up in wonder, we know in our deepest heart that God is love.

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

**RELATIONSHIPS COME ALIVE:**

The Good News of John's Gospel is that Christ does not call us slaves, but friends [John 15:9-17]. He has chosen us as friends and has given his life for us. Jesus shares with us the secrets of the Father who loves us unconditionally. He assures us that we can use his name in putting our petitions before God. While our friendship with Christ is the source of a deep and abiding joy, it also places fundamental demands on us — we are to remain in his love by keeping his commandments. Jesus calls us to love one another as he has loved us. Our Christian vocation is to share his self-sacrificing love for us with others — and to do so with a joyful spirit.

John's Gospel invites us to reflect on our own friendships. We do not choose our parents or siblings, but we do choose our friends. We like to spend time with them and to do things together. If we are blessed with good friends, prayers of gratitude are certainly in order. A husband who considers his wife his best friend thanks God every day for this blessing.

Loyalty is a crucial virtue for maintaining friendships. Think, for a moment, of Mary of Magdalen who remained faithful to Jesus through his passion and death. A collegian stood by her pregnant friend, after she was abandoned by the father. She was there for her friend through the birth and beyond.

Friendships can go badly — misunderstandings, disappointments, inattention, and even betrayal. This makes forgiveness essential to maintaining and restoring friendships. We learn from Christ who forgave his friends after they abandoned him, offering them a greeting of peace and an opportunity to start over with him. Following the example of Jesus, a small business owner not only forgave his friend who stole some money from the company, but managed to restore their friendship over a period of time.

What can you learn from Christ about deepening and strengthening your friendships and relationships?

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

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

<b>Monday:</b>	Acts 16:11-15, John 15:26-16:4a
<b>Tuesday:</b>	Acts 16:22-34, John 16:5-11
<b>Wednesday:</b>	Acts 17:15,22-18:1, John 16:12-15
<b>Thursday:</b>	Acts 18:1-8, John 16:16-20
<b>Friday:</b>	Acts 18:9-18, John 16:20-23
<b>Saturday:</b>	Acts 18:23-28, John 16:23b-28
<b>Ascension of Jesus</b>	Acts 1:1-11, Ephesians 1:17-23, Mark 16:15-20

## LETTERS TO GOD — REASONS TO JOURNAL:

My first writing professor was a short stocky man who didn't like religion and wore a Harley Davidson leather jacket to class. Even more so, he was bald with a white goatee and his signature move was honesty. He didn't believe in sugar-coating life. Honesty was the only thing that made for good writing — even if the truth hurt. Despite all these eccentric quirks, his teachings changed not only my writing, but my life.

One day my professor pulled out a small book from his bag. It had a black cover and the pages looked yellow and worn out. “So, does anyone in here use a journal?” he asked. Not waiting long for our class' response he mumbled: “Hmm, that's too bad.”

He continued to explain that his journal was his sanctuary — the place where he found safety and calm. He wrote down all the experiences that inspired him, all his thoughts, and most importantly his struggles. It was the place where he processed the joys and hopes, the griefs, and anxieties of life.

“Don't be fooled” he warned us, “this isn't a diary — it's a secret weapon, a tool for your success and for your happiness.”

Immediately after class I drove to the bookstore and bought my first journal. Ten years and five journals later, you'll find my own worn-out journal in my backpack. So what's the big hype about journaling? What can it do for you? Here are five reasons why you should start a journal today.

1. **Keep your brain healthy.** It's one thing to want to pray more; It's another thing to actually sit down and do it. And even when you do pray, there are an endless number of obstacles and distractions. So often I walk into the chapel and sit there with my brain scrambled. When there are 10,000 things going on at the same time, it's easy to get overwhelmed in prayer. But if I write my prayer — things are different. Writing down my thoughts and prayers force me to focus on one thing at a time. My brain automatically tries to process a “bagillion” things at a time, but working through my thoughts slowly on paper puts my soul at rest.
2. **Find Peace and clarity.** Journaling might be weird and even painful at first, but the fruit of that struggle is peace and clarity. Writing my thoughts slow me down enough to remember that God is with me through it all. Moreover, it reminds me that God's plan is bigger than the one I've drawn up in my head. Journaling always seems like a burden, but every time I begin my prayer this way, I find myself more peaceful with a greater sense of clarity and direction.
3. **Create evidence of God's plan.** I've been journaling for almost ten years, and every now and again I find myself randomly reading my old entries. I'll open it, turn to a random page, look at the date, and it's as if I am reading my own biography. There was a time I spent two hours reading the whole journal because I was in awe of the ways that God worked with me through my doubts, pain, and fears. Some pages even had teardrops that bled into the ink. My journals are evidence that I have been through some tough times in my life, but even more so, it's proof that God has a plan for us and that our suffering is only temporary. My prayers and my letters to God are all hard evidence that things get better — in fact, they get more than better. Document your current prayers and your struggles and be amazed at the ways God works in your life over the years. Write it down so that you can be living proof of someone who has died and risen with Christ.
4. **Allow God to become a real friend.** Have you ever noticed how difficult it is to chat with a stranger? Even when you have good intentions and genuinely want to start a conversation, sometimes there is a natural awkwardness that comes with the task. Every



now and then I experience this in my prayer. When I pray, I go through the usual and polite routines — sign of the cross, thank you for..., protect this person, etc... — but then I find myself at a loss for anything meaningful to say. There are times when I go so long without praying that God becomes a stranger to me. Over the years, I've discovered that keeping a consistent journal creates a history of your relationship. Think about this. The best conversations I have are with my best friends, and it's because we have a history of things to chat about. When I see them I can't help but ask them how their week was, how their job interview went or how their vacation was. There is a certain ease to the friendship because of the countless memories we share together. My best friendships require a continual act of checking up on each other. During difficult times, I never demand that my friends fix my problems. I simply appreciate they are with me because their presence can ease the pain. The same goes with God. Spiritual journaling is yet another tool that creates relationship history — it draws us deeper and deeper into friendship with an infinite God who thirsts for our attention. Almost all of my entries begin with “Dear Lord” and conclude with “Until next time...” You, of course, can and should find your own way to speak to God, but these entries give us opportunities to continue the conversation with ease rather than being at a loss for words like we so often are. The intimacy level of your entries is all up to you, but I would encourage you to write as if you are on a mission to fall in love.

5. **Write for your grandkids or for those who come after you.** I have a distinct memory of being at my grandfather's funeral. We were surrounded by loved ones, picture boards, slideshows, and even poetry about the generous life that he lived. But even after all the stories, I wish I could have heard about his life first hand; I wish I could know the young disciple that he was. It sounds silly, but another reason that I journal is for my future grandkids. I want them to know that I, like them, was a real person, with real struggles, challenges, and sometimes hopeless situations. But through it all, it was Christ who transformed my life into something worth living. Spiritual journaling leaves a trace of our struggle to be holy. If we seek Christ worthily, our lives can blaze a pathway to Him, and our written prayers can be a way for us to share in each other's journeys.

When I was nineteen and at the beginning of my spiritual journey, I found myself with nowhere to go on Valentine's Day. In my loneliness, I drove to an adoration chapel. I knew of a church that had perpetual adoration, and it calmed my soul to know that I could spend Valentine's day feeling wanted, accepted, and deeply loved. That day I spent over two hours writing, praying, listening to music, talking — hanging out.

Looking back at my entry, I didn't receive any quick fixes. I was still single after walking out of the chapel — the drama didn't disappear — but I left hopeful that God had a much bigger plan for me.

Journaling isn't a magic trick — it's a style of prayer that brings us closer to an intimate friendship with the divine. It's a powerful tool that leads us to surrender to His mysterious plan rather than frantically praying for a quick fix to our unending litany of struggles.

—taken from the writings of Jurell Sison, 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](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

