

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

**~ A Prayer in Gratitude for Mothers ~**

**Good and Gentle God,  
we pray in gratitude  
for our mother  
and for all women  
who have joined with you  
in the wonder of bringing forth new life.**

**You who became human through a woman,  
grant to all mothers  
the courage they need  
to face the uncertain future  
that life with children always brings.**

**Give them the strength  
to live and to be loved in return,  
not perfectly,  
but humanly.**

**Give them the faithful support  
of husband, family and friends  
as they care for the physical  
and spiritual growth of their children.**

**Give them joy and delight  
in their children to sustain them  
through the trials of motherhood.**

**Most of all,  
give them the wisdom  
to turn to you for help  
when they need it most.  
Amen.**

**CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:**

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.  
phone: [440] 473-3560 [office] or 216-570-9276 [cell].  
e-mail: blazekj@gilmour.org

# Our Lady Chapel



*Our Lady Chapel is a Roman Catholic community founded in the love of the Father, centered in Christ, and rooted in the Holy Cross tenets of building family and embracing diversity. We are united in our journey of faith through prayer and sacrament, and we seek growth through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in liturgy and outreach, while responding to the needs of humanity.*

**IMPORTANT SCHEDULE CHANGE COMING MAY 26: [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>** Masses. 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. All are welcome. 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:**

Today is Mother's Day. Today we honor 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.

**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>.**

**SPIRITUAL FITNESS:**

This weekend, we celebrate **the Feast of the Ascension of Jesus**. The Feast was moved to a Sunday by the Bishops of the United States so that more people would be able to benefit from sharing in the Eucharist on this day. Contrary to the feeling of many that "Jesus is now gone from our sight", but the mystery of this Feast lies in the reality that "Jesus is still here", and we need to respond to his presence among us.



- The Feast of the Ascension reminds us that God does not withhold his power from us; rather he freely offers it to us through the Holy Spirit. How could you become a better instrument of God's grace to others? How could you get more in touch with God throughout your day?
- In John's Gospel, Jesus consecrates himself for us. To what or who are you consecrated?
- Jesus promised the disciples that he would be with them until the end of time. How does God protect you in your life? How do you rely on God and God's promises for you in your daily life?

**PRAYER IS GRACE:**

We cannot force God into a relationship. God comes to us on his own initiative, and no discipline, effort, or ascetic practice can make him come. All mystics stress with an impressive unanimity that prayer is "grace"— that is, a free gift from God, to which we can only respond with gratitude. But they hasten to add that this precious gift indeed is within our reach. In Jesus Christ, God has entered into our lives in the most intimate way, so that we could enter into his life through the Spirit.

—Henri Nouwen

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Pam Spicer, wife of former Gilmour football coach, Bob Spicer.
- For Daniel Cavoli.
- For Laurie 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
- For Sister Mary Collins, O.S.B.
- For Sister GERALYN Stenger, S.N.D.

**YOU ARE PART OF THE STORY:**

Every time we pray the Creed we say: Jesus "ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father." Over the course of the past several weeks, Jesus has reminded all of us that he "is the vine and we are the branches." He has also called us to "remain in me; remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love." This, then, is the ultimate reality — remaining in Jesus.

What does this mean? Randy Alcorn tells about a British physician who died of AIDS. A young Christian man, the doctor had volunteered to treat patients in Zimbabwe. In the last days of his life, he struggled to express himself to his wife. He only had enough strength to write the letter J. She started saying words beginning with that letter. Finally she said: "Jesus?" He nodded. Yes, Jesus. Jesus filled his thoughts. That's all he wanted to say. That's all his wife needed to know. And, in the end, that's all any of us needs to know. For a disciple — like that young physician — Jesus gives the assurance and the requirements for our lives.

Now let's look at the ascension, and the words of the creed. "Right hand" means "power" and "authority" [Acts 1:1-11]. Paul, in his letter to the Church at Ephesus, describes Jesus "at the right hand" of the Father above every power with "all things beneath his feet" [Ephesians 1:17-23]. Thus we glimpse how the drama ends. On the Feast of the Ascension we see that we belong to a story — the drama of human history that climaxes in Jesus' triumph. As his disciples you and I have a part in that story.

Now, any good story involves conflict, suspense and unexpected twists. God has a plan for us; He created each one of us with a purpose — a role — to play. God is the master story teller. Each person has a part in the overall plot. There are no extraneous characters. Think for a moment of Rosie Cotten — a very minor character in the *Lord of the Rings*. She becomes Samwise' wife after he returns from his adventure. She hardly has the stunning beauty of Arwen or courage of Eowyn. But the *Lord of the Rings* would not be the same without Rosie Cotten.

Something similar applies to one of us. When the human drama reaches its climax — the day of final triumph — if you are not there, it will not be the same story. At the end of the story things will become clear — why each character has to face his/her own crisis, conflict and pain. On this Feast of the Ascension, we glimpse how the story ends. On the Feast of Pentecost, we will see how it begins. Don't miss it. It's a darn good story — and you are called to be part of it.

Place yourself under Jesus' authority; become his disciple. He won't take away all your pain and questioning. But he will give you a part in the great drama — it won't be the same story without you.

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

**GET CONNECTED:**

The sacred is all around us, and small human rituals can connect us to its presence.

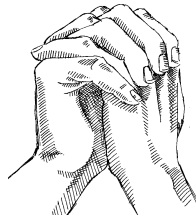
—Alma Villanueva

**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 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.
- 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 Jakub Bennisish ['30], who is undergoing treatment for various medical issues.
- For Crawford Mitchell, 3 year-old grandson of Debbie Moss Batt, who is preparing for open heart surgery.



**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

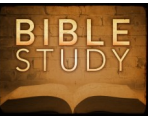
Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

**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.

**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, MAY 15<sup>th</sup>:**

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, May 15<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 12: Ascension of Jesus	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, May 13:	9:15 AM
Tuesday, May 14: St. Matthias, Apostle	NO MASS
Wednesday, May 15:	NO MASS
Thursday, May 16:	NO MASS
Friday, May 17:	NO MASS
Saturday, May 18: Vigil of Pentecost	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, May 19: Pentecost Sunday	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.

**PRACTICAL ADVICE:**

Success may require many steps, but progress only requires one.

—Jay Taylor

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

This weekend we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of Jesus. If you look closely at the gospel for this Feast [Mark 16:15-20], it sounds like a Commencement ceremony. So, if Jesus were to give a speech at a Commencement Ceremony, what would it be like?

“Dear administrators, members of the Board of Directors, faculty and staff, parents and families, and especially to you, the Class of 2024, my Peace. My words here will be brief, for I have a special transport of a sort waiting for me immediately at the end of this talk — you’ll see. It will be worth sticking around for, believe me!

“We are gathered here at something called a Commencement Ceremony. Thus, we celebrate the beginning of your ministry — not the end of mine. So as you leave this place of learning — this place where you get second chances and a sympathetic ear for your troubles — I have some challenges for you, and some words of advice. Some of the things I will talk about today I have said in the past in more antiquated ways. I have adapted them to your life and times here in the Midwestern part of the United States, in the year of Me — 2024.

“This institution was formed in the ways and mind of one of my most beloved disciples, Basil Moreau. His charisms directed him towards the teaching and parish ministries, in the spirit of a missionary, and as an advocate for the poor and marginalized. So in the past when I said to “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature,” what Basil took it to mean was to get out there and listen first with the mind and the heart, and then respond freely and generously with his life. You won’t get very far in this day and age trying to push your beliefs on others. Did I not preach in parables during my time of ministry? Did I not clearly observe those to whom I would speak, noting where their hearts were troubled or otherwise focused, and then use those touchstones as ways to talk about the Kingdom of Heaven in a way that immediately touched their hearts? Good news is not good news unless it is delivered in a way that touches the people where they live, literally. Don’t forget that.

“I have also, in the past, spoken of signs that will accompany those who believe — namely, the driving out demons, speaking new languages, picking up serpents with one’s hands, drinking deadly things without harm, and laying one’s hands on the sick as a way of healing. Many of you have lost touch with these signs — abandoning them as vestiges of the past with no effect on your world today. I would like to take a few moments to talk about each one; for if you ignore these signs, you miss out on much of what I meant.

“The driving out of demons, you might think is the most antiquated term of all — truly a thing of the past perpetuated by a group of largely superstitious people. Many people of today — likely many of you sitting out there — do not even believe in demons. Yet, there is evil in this world, and I don’t have to tell you that. You all believe that evil exists since you see it and hear it every day in some form. So where does this evil come from? The problem is that you believe in evil, but you don’t believe in demons. I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life [see John 14:6]. All of these are hated by demons. They shriek when they come into contact with them — especially the Truth. Their immediate and virulent reaction to the Truth -- the hatred and arrogance and inhuman and vile disregard for the sanctity of humanity — is the sign you are looking for. Not everyone has the temperament to drive out demons. These gifts are not given to all. But for those to whom they’ve been given — and that includes some of you sitting here — my challenge is to use the Truth — not half-truths or contrivances made to make you feel better — but the real Truth — to drive out demons wherever you find them. It’s not for the faint of heart.

**PARABLE FOR A MOTHER:**

[on this Mother’s Day, we offer this reflection that we have used before — but it’s power and force remain]

The young mother set her foot on the path of Life. “Is the way long?” she asked. And her Guide said: “Yes, and the way is hard. And you will be old before you reach the end of it. But the end will be better than the beginning.”

But the young mother was happy, and she would not believe that anything could be better than these years. So she played with her children, and gathered flowers for them along the way, and bathed with them in the streams, and the sun shone upon them, and life was good, and the young mother cried: “Nothing will ever be lovelier than this.”

Then night came, and storm, and the path was dark, and the children shook with fear and cold, and the mother drew them close and covered them with her mantle. And the children said: “Oh. Mother, we are not afraid, for you are near, and no harm can come.” And the mother said: “This is better than the brightest of days, for I have taught my children courage.”

And the morning came, and there was a hill ahead, and the children climbed and grew weary, and the mother was weary, but at all times she said to the children: “A little patience and we are there.” So the children climbed, and when they reached the top, they said: “We could not have done it without you, Mother.” And the mother, when she lay down that night, looked up at the stars and said: “This is a better day than the last, for my children have learned fortitude in the face of difficulty. Yesterday I gave them courage; today I have given them strength.”

And the next day came strange clouds which darkened the earth — clouds of war and hate and evil, and the children groped and stumbled, and the mother said: “Look up! Lift your eyes to the light.” And the children looked and saw above the clouds an Everlasting Glory, and it guided them beyond the darkness. And that night the mother said: “This is the best day of all, for I have shown my children God.”

And the days went on, and the months and the years, and the mother grew old, and she was small and bent. But her children were strong and tall and walked with courage. And when the way was hard, they helped their mother; and when the way was rough they lifted her, for she was as light as a feather; and at last they came to a hill, and beyond the hill they could see a shining road and golden gates flung wide. And the mother said: “I have reached the end of my journey. And now I know that the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk alone, and their children after them.”

And the children said: “You will always walk with us, Mother, even when you have gone through the gates.” And they stood and watched her as she went on alone, and the gates closed after her. And they said: “We cannot see her, but she is with us. A mother like ours is more than a memory. She is a living presence.”

Your Mother is always with you. She’s the whisper of the leaves as you walk down the street; she’s the smell of bleach in your freshly laundered socks; she’s the cool hand on your brow when you’re not well. Your Mother lives inside your laughter, and she’s crystallized in every teardrop. She’s the place you came from — your first home; she’s the map you follow with every step you take. She’s your first love and your first heartbreak; she’s a gift from a God who knows an awful lot about love. Nothing can separate you — not time ...not space ...not even death.

**STRONG WORDS:**

A Christian without courage, who does not turn his own strength to good, who does not bother anyone, is a useless Christian.



**THE EMPTY CHAIR:**

How familiar are we with God’s Presence in our lives — I mean, really?!?! We say that we are because that’s the right answer to the question. Recently, I came across a story of an old man dying of cancer. The old man’s daughter had asked the local priest to come and pray with her father. When the priest arrived, he found the man lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows and an empty chair beside his bed. The priest assumed that the old fellow had been informed of his visit. “I guess you were expecting me,” he said. “No, who are you?” “I’m the new associate at your parish,” the priest replied. “When I saw the empty chair, I figured you knew I was going to show up.” “Oh yeah, the chair,” said the bedridden man. “Would you mind closing the door?”

Puzzled, the priest shut the door. “I’ve never told anyone this — not even my daughter,” said the man, “but all my life I have never known how to pray. At the Sunday Mass, I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer, but it always went right over my head. Finally, I said to him one day in sheer frustration: ‘I get nothing out of your homilies on prayer.’ ‘Here,’ says my pastor, ‘read this book by Hans Urs von Balthasar. He’s a Swiss theologian. It’s the best book on contemplative prayer in the twentieth century.’ Well, Father,” says the man, “I took the book home and tried to read it. But in the first three pages I had to look up twelve words in the dictionary. I gave the book back to my pastor, thanked him, and under my breath whispered: ‘for nothin’.

I abandoned any attempt at prayer,” he continued, “until one day about four years ago my best friend said to me: ‘Joe, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here’s what I suggest. Sit down on a chair, place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It’s not spooky because He promised: ‘I’ll be with you all days.’ Then just speak to Him and listen in the same way you’re doing with me right now.’ ‘So, Padre, I tried it, and I’ve liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I’m careful, though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she’d either have a nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny farm.’”



The priest was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old guy to continue on the journey. Then he prayed with him, anointed him with oil, and returned to the rectory. Two nights later the daughter called to tell the priest that her daddy had died that afternoon. “Did he seem to die in peace?” the priest asked. “Yes, when I left the house around two o’clock, he called me over to his bedside, told me one of his corny jokes, and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him dead. But there was something strange, Father. In fact, beyond strange — kind of weird. Apparently just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on a chair beside his bed.”

What if we were really attuned to God’s Presence in our lives — like this man in the story? What difference would it make given the realities of the world we live in?

—taken from the writings of Brother John-Marmion Villa, which appear on the internet

**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

“The speaking of new languages you have all experienced during your time here. I’m not talking necessarily about the foreign languages you all learn as part of your study — though they are certainly part of this, too. At the beginning of each course, you have learned vocabulary and terminology important to your professions, so that you are able to say things in a more precise, more profound way. Your discourse with those of your profession has become more powerful. Your challenge is to engage in the discourse — to speak the new language to those who will hear it — especially those who need to hear it. Engage the world as a professional — as a caring and well-trained professional — but don’t forget that your language should be nuanced by the ministry you have undertaken. To many, the language you speak will be very new, yet also very familiar at the same time. They’ll know soon enough that they are in the presence of a master in whatever discipline you have chosen to pursue.

“The picking up of serpents, and the drinking of deadly things — children in the audience, please don’t take this literally. Graduates, in your education, you have learned how to interact with the world, and especially the dangerous elements of it, in a knowledgeable and safe way. This is part of a well-rounded education. There are dangerous, yet powerful machines out there, and technology that can either do miraculous things for — or horrific things against — humanity. There are risky places where you must use all of your cunning and skill to avoid harm. But with your training, the risk is worth it. Do not be afraid to go into the dangerous places — those places where your trained hands are needed most — and do what you have been taught to do. For that is where I am needed most. That is where you are needed most.

“And finally, the laying on of hands for the healing of the sick. You have here, I know, schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy. For all of you, the results of your efforts are direct. Most of the people with whom you will work will get better, and you will see it happen. Blessed are you!

“But how about the rest of you? How about you biologists, you lawyers, you accountants, you musicians, you sociologists, you philosophers, just to name a few. How about all of the rest of you? Never forget that the laying on of hands, which is nothing more than applying your professions in a sacred way — a healing way — is always THE way, to minister to those hearts and souls with whom you have been entrusted. It may mean lower profits, or less prestige, or a few less possessions, but it also means that you are an agent of healing, a Christian trained in the mold of Basil Moreau — and that sets you apart.

“So I see my transport is here — this cloud forming above me is no accident. Some good men and women, from among your faculty, staff, students, and administrators, will stay around to answer your questions about some of the things I have spoken about today. They are the ones in the white robes [see Revelation 7]. I encourage you to talk with one another, to be travellers together on your road to Emmaus.

“I wish you all my peace — and not so much success in the future — as I wish that you all may continue to grow in heart, mind, and soul to serve your brother and sister in whatever capacity you have been taught here. And to that, I say, farewell.”

The readings for this Feast of the Ascension of Jesus tell you what happened from this point of the story. Now that’s a Commencement ceremony I would like to see — maybe I just did.

—edited from the writings of Father Larry Gillick, S.J., 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].



**THE ASCENSION IN KAIROS TIME:**

Imagine you are back in your parents' home where you lived as a youngster and that you are exploring its attic filled with the many items collected from your family's past history. Imagine yourself coming upon your grandmother's trunk and how much you really want to discover what's in it. But to open it, you will need to find a key. The same is true with sacred scripture — you need keys in order to open up its various passages. We need a key to open up what is hidden in the suffering, death, resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus Christ to the to the right hand of the Father in heaven.

For the Scripture Readings for this Feast of the Ascension of Jesus, the key is found in understanding that there is “chronos time” and there is “kairos time”. Chronos time is linear and quantitative. It is human time; we humans measure things by it. Kairos time is God's time. Scripture tells us “in the fullness of time God sent His only-begotten Son into our world” [see Galatians 4:4]. Normal events and the rules of nature are suspended, and God disrupts things as He enters into our space and time according to His schedule.

To glean the meaning of the Ascension, we need to see it in the Lord's time — Kairos time. We need to see it in one Kairos event — namely as a part of the suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Actually it's better to see it as the closing act of the drama that began with God's Word coming down from heaven and becoming flesh in the Virgin Mary. The Ascension completes the circle. God our Father sends His son among us to gather us together in Him in a holy communion. He thereupon takes us back to our heavenly home, back to our Father. This is all because of God's initiative; this is all God's project, not ours. God accomplishes for us what we are powerless to bring about. To say it is the briefest of words, God our Father sends us His Son to bring us, His prodigal children, back home to heaven. United in Christ we are “taken up” into heaven.

St. Mark reports in this gospel account that Jesus was “taken up to heaven.” Immediately we associate the word “up” with a directional measurement. But it's a mistake to do so. The word “up” is used in the sense of telling us that Jesus entered another dimension, a higher and greater dimension. He was taken up into the parallel universe from which He came to us in the first place — a universe we call heaven.

It isn't proper to call His ascension a departure. It wasn't a departure anymore than His death on the cross was a departure — a going away from us. Christ's ascension into heaven is parallel to His Easter resurrection — both are inaugurations of a new Presence. God has not left us — God has instead comes to us in a new way, a way that is just as sure as His coming to us that holy night in Bethlehem, coming to us from a universe above ours. It's all in God's time.

The Ascension of our Lord was the inauguration of His new presence among us. His visible presence has now passed into the sacraments — the “body language” of His Mystical Body, a body which no grave can contain. It is in His sacraments that we, 2000 years after His ascension “to the right hand of the Father,” can encounter Him. The Ascension is not a physical elevation — it is a qualitative elevation. In Christ our lives are “heightened” with Him so that with Him we can return to our Father in heaven.

The ascension of Jesus Christ is not His leaving us — it is, like His mysterious birth, the inauguration God's presence to us in a totally new way, a way that we cannot measure or put into any of our puny little human categories of time and space. Christ's ascension inaugurates the coming of the

**NOT ABSENCE, BUT MISSION:**

Many New Testament stories appear to be variations of one another with minor adjustments. Not so Jesus' ascension. What the different accounts have in common is that Christ appeared among his disciples and missioned them to continue his work.

According to most scholars, Mark ended his Gospel by saying that the women fled from the empty tomb and said nothing to anyone because they were afraid [Mark 16:8]. Mark apparently ended this way to provoke his community. Writing around the year 70 AD — not long after Peter's martyrdom — Mark's audience knew persecution and had reason to be frightened. Mark wanted to jolt them beyond their fear. Mark's community knew that the women really did spread the word — the Gospel was being preached. Still, Mark was warning the community that if they remained afraid or used any other excuse to avoid giving witness to the risen Lord, the message would disappear.

Unsatisfied with Mark's disappointing ending, later scribes wrote more “adequate” conclusions and added some spectacular signs among those who preached the Gospel message. Examining Luke's account of the Ascension in Acts, we note that before saying that Jesus promised the disciples that they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit, he gave his followers “instructions through the Holy Spirit” [Acts 1:1-11]. Then, as he was about to be taken up, Jesus again promised: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.”

Throughout his Gospel, Luke mentions the Spirit no fewer than 15 times. Luke depicts the Spirit's presence from the moment an angel announced the birth of John the Baptist through Jesus' ministry and beyond. Luke presents the reception of the Spirit at Pentecost as the apex, not the first or last activity of the Spirit among Jesus' disciples. For Luke, the Spirit's presence in and to the disciples is a process, not a once-for-all event.

In his Letter to the Church at Ephesus, Paul gives helpful ideas about the Spirit-power the disciples received. Paul teaches that the power to carry out Christ's mission bestows wisdom, revelation, knowledge of Christ, enlightenment, hope, and a share in the riches of Christ's glory [Ephesians 1:17-23]. For Paul, these qualities summarize the effects of following Christ and sharing his Spirit.

No matter how they depict it, each Gospel proclaims that the risen Christ made himself present to his disciples and handed over his mission with the promise that they would have the grace and strength to carry it out. This tells us that the feast of the Ascension is not about absence, but mission.

Luke's narrative shows that the Spirit of God was uniquely active even before the angel gave Mary the mission to be Mother of God and continues working in all who are willing to let Christ become present through them. The feast of the Ascension commissions Christ's followers through all ages, reminding us that Christ's mission continues through us and that the grace to accomplish it remains ever available to us. This is the point Luke made by saying that Jesus instructed the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit [see Luke 24:49]. They knew the Spirit's presence, but needed to grow in it as they started to do what Jesus did.

We might note that the message of the Ascension is particularly apt as we participate in the Synod on Synodality. Jesus gives us his mission, and also the Spirit that empowers us to accomplish it. Like the disciples sent to wait in Jerusalem, instead of planning and carrying out what we think is right, our times call us to listen to the Spirit Christ bestows on all disciples. The Spirit of Christ calls forth an innumerable variety of expressions of Christ's mission. To the extent that we are open, the Spirit will keep awakening us to the richness discoverable only in a community of believers on mission.

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

**SHARE:**

Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it..

—Mary Oliver

**THE ASCENSION AND US:**

One of the most interesting aspects of Mark's Gospel the story of the ascension of Jesus — along with the commissioning of the disciples — was added long after Mark completed his gospel. Mark's Original Gospel ended with the statement: "So they [Mary and the women] went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" [Mark 16:8]. Why was Mark 16:15-20 added? Why couldn't later Christians be content with Mark's insight that the risen Jesus is simply "out there somewhere?"

It seems that some scribes read more than Mark's gospel — writings which, like Luke, included ascensions, or, like Matthew, narrated special "commissions" for the disciples, or, like Acts, described a miraculous snake handling. Thinking it was their job to get Mark in line with other authors of the Christian Scriptures, these well-meaning scribes constructed endings for the first evangelist which coincided with those other writings.

One of the most difficult things for modern Western readers of Scripture to appreciate is that our sacred authors didn't think the way we think. It isn't that they thought about different things; something went on in their minds when they were thinking that doesn't go on in most of ours. They were Semitic — not Greek — thinkers. We, who were trained in Greek thought from childhood, analyze whatever we're thinking about. We mentally tear it apart, trying to get to an either/or statement about it.

Semites, on the other hand, synthesize. They try to get as many aspects or dimensions of the thing in their minds at the same time — even contradictory aspects or dimensions. They judge their thought process a success when they can come up with a "both/and" statement — especially when they're thinking about God or Jesus. They presumed both are too complicated to analyze. Those who do so are always leaving something out.

That's why Semitic thinking authors Luke and John can speak of an ascension, and Matthew and Mark don't. Luke can make it a permanent ascension, and John teaches that it's temporary. Remember, the sacred authors are not writing history — they're conveying theology. They're more concerned with the meaning of what happened, than in exactly narrating the facts of what happened. And they do this without trying to say that facts are worthless.

Perhaps St. Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus can add much to this discussion. The disciple of Paul who wrote it believes that it is very important for his community to understand the implications of being called to carry on the ministry of the risen Jesus. As he/she mentions, we follow someone who both ascended and descended, someone who was concerned for the entire universe — a concern he passes on to all who work daily at being "other Christs" [Ephesians 1:17-23]. We, like Jesus, are commissioned to "fill all things."

If that's our mission, then it is essential that we reflect on the gifts we've been given by God. It's only when each of us employs those gifts to the best of our ability that we "build up the body of Christ" — always trying to attain "the full stature of Christ."

The author presumes no one will use his or her gifts in exactly the same way. Paul clearly wrote about that diversity of the Spirit in his first letter to the Church at Corinth. It's never a matter of either/or; it's always both/and. If the risen Jesus is complicated, then the risen Jesus' disciples are also complicated.

It might be a good idea while the Liturgy of the Word is being proclaimed on this Feast of the Ascension, to look around. Notice all who are hearing these words. Appreciate how different they are from you, and how the Spirit has gifted them in unique ways — ways in which we are not blessed. Then thank God that there are contradictions in our Scriptures. Without them, we'd never be certain that we're looking at God, or ourselves in the right way. .

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

Holy Spirit upon us to be with us until the end of the ages.

A long time ago there lived in England a holy man named St. Bede, known by historians as The Venerable Bede. He lived from 673-735 A.D. Among the things he wrote are the following words he penned while meditating on the death of loved ones: "We seem to give them back to you, O God, who gave them first to us. Yet as you did not lose them in giving, so we do not lose them by their return. Not as the world gives do you give. What you give you do not take away. For what is yours is also ours. We are yours and life is eternal. And love is immortal, and death is only a horizon, and a horizon is but the limit to our sight."

The Church's liturgies will now focus on Pentecost and the time after Pentecost. With Pentecost we have yet another inauguration of God's Presence among us. In the life and the acts of the Church, the Holy Spirit is at work in the human soul. That is what the Book of Acts in the New Testament is all about. Some theologians like to speak of the Book of Acts as the "Book of the Holy Spirit". It reveals to us the marvelous works of God as He expresses them in our human works. Indeed, the life of the Church is all about the workings of the Holy Spirit.

Our human responses to God's presence have not been what they should be. We are "being redeemed sinners" — we are a work in progress. Our sins, our failures, our rejection of God's loving presence is found in both secular human history as well as in the history of the Church. All of the human depravity that was present in Christ's suffering, passion and death did not end with His resurrection and ascension; it continues on in our unredeemed humanity, as we so very well know. But because of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension resulting the Holy Spirit being sent down upon us, we are being made new again.

Some claim that God failed. Others live as if Christ was a failure. Still others simply don't seem to care. Is this God's fault? Or is it our fault? The answer is obvious.

It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ was conceived in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. During His life, Jesus manifested the power of God's Holy Spirit at work in His miracles. By the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus was raised from the dead to become the Christ of glory. And now, because of His ascension back to the Father, Christ with His Father sends us the Holy Spirit. This points to the necessity of Christ's ascension, His movement into that higher world, that universe that is God's. For without Christ's Ascension, Pentecost would not have happened.

God is with us. God has always been with us, and God will always be with us. The Ascension is not His departure; it is the ushering in of His new way of being with us, His presence among us now in His Holy Spirit.

How, then, will we respond? Human history reveals responses that are both good and bad. The saints, however, reveal God's Holy Spirit at work within us. Your lives and mine can do the same. May Christ, by the power of His Holy Spirit, be with you now and forever more. And may you one day, because of Jesus Christ, ascend into heaven.

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

**SEEING WITH NEW EYES:**

The soul, enlightened by faith, judges of things in a very different way to those who, having only the standard of the senses by which to measure them, ignore the inestimable treasure they contain. The soul that recognizes the will of God in every smallest event, and also in those that are most distressing and direful, receives all with an equal joy, pleasure and respect. It throws open all its doors to receive with honor what others fear and fly from with horror. The outward appearance may be mean and contemptible, but beneath this abject garb the heart discovers and honors the majesty of the king. The deeper the abasement of his entry in such a guise and in secret the more does the heart become filled with love."

—Fr. Jean-Pierre de Caussade

**POPE FRANCIS ANNOUNCES THE JUBILEE YEAR:**

On Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, Pope Francis officially announced that the year 2025 would be a Jubilee Year. We have known that this was coming, but now it has been officially proclaimed. The papal bull, titled *Spes Non Confudit* [*Hope Does Not Disappoint*], declares that the Jubilee Year will officially begin with the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica on Christmas Eve 2024. **The Jubilee Year will be a year of HOPE.** Below is Pope Francis' announcement.

“Hope does not disappoint” [Romans 5:5]. In the spirit of hope, the Apostle Paul addressed these words of encouragement to the Christian community of Rome. Hope is also the central message of the coming Jubilee that, in accordance with an ancient tradition, the Pope proclaims every twenty-five years. My thoughts turn to all those pilgrims of hope who will travel to Rome in order to experience the Holy Year, and to all those others who, though unable to visit the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul, will celebrate it in their local Churches. For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the “door” [see John 10:7-9] of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as “our hope” [see 1 Timothy 1:1].

Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often, we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness. For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. God's word helps us find reasons for that hope.

Taking it as our guide, let us return to the message that the Apostle Paul wished to communicate to the Christians of Rome: “Since we are justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing in the glory of God. Hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” [Romans 5:1-2,5]. In this passage, Saint Paul gives us much to reflect upon. We know that the Letter to the Romans marked a decisive turning point in his work of evangelization. Until then, he had carried out his activity in the eastern part of the Empire, but now he turns to Rome and all that Rome meant in the eyes of the world. Before him lay a great challenge, which he took up for the sake of preaching the Gospel, which knows no barriers or confines. The Church of Rome was not founded by Paul, yet he felt impelled to hasten there in order to bring to everyone the Gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, a message of hope that fulfills the ancient promises, leads to glory and, grounded in love, does not disappoint.

Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross: “For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life” [Romans 5:19]. That life becomes manifest in our own life of faith, which begins with Baptism, develops in openness to God's grace and is enlivened by a hope constantly renewed and confirmed by the working of the Holy Spirit.

By his perennial presence in the life of the pilgrim Church, the Holy Spirit illumines all believers with the light of hope. He keeps that light burning, like an ever-burning lamp, to sustain and invigorate our lives. Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God's love: “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” [Romans 8:35.37-39]. Here we see the reason why this hope perseveres in the midst of trials. Founded on faith and nurtured by charity, it enables us to press forward in life. As Saint Augustine observes: “Whatever our state of life, we cannot live without these three dispositions of the soul, namely, to

and found a life free of evil, a life of meaning — the Christian life. Jesus ascends to heaven and then says to us: “Get to work. Fight off the snake, the devil. Fight off poisons of the world. You can win these victories. You can win them because I really haven't left you. I am with you. My spirit — the Holy Spirit — strengthens you. We all have poisons that we have to fight off in our lives. We all have our own demons. Some are of our own making; some are imposed upon us by others or by situations beyond our control.

One person wages a continual battle against alcohol. Another against drugs. One is fighting to be in a Christian relationship with his girlfriend or her boyfriend. Another is fighting against his or her own selfishness. One must deal with the fact that her family is not what it should be. Another is suffering the terror of abuse. One has physical challenges, another has psychological challenges. All these and so many other demons and poisons of the world attack us, but they can't beat us down. We will win against the evil of the world because we have the greatest weapon there ever was — we possess Jesus Christ. Jesus ascends into heaven and assumes His place as Lord of heaven and earth. What does that mean? It means that Jesus has the power to win, to beat off evil. It means that He is in control. It means that He is our Lord. He is the one who fights for us and with us.

In sports and in life the best defense is a good offense. When Jesus ascended into heaven, His followers went on offense. They didn't cower in a room, afraid of what the enemies of God's kingdom would do to them. Instead, they took the battle to the devil. The gospel puts this so simply — “They went forth and preached everywhere”. People who would never leave their villages except to travel to Jerusalem, journeyed throughout the world to wage the battle of the Kingdom. They preached everywhere. That's what we are all called to do.

We are called to take the battle to the enemy. We are called to combat moral evil wherever it exists — within us and around us. We are called give people the Gospel, the good News. The Good News is this: there is a much better life than the one the world paints as ideal. There is a life where every action has meaning. There is a life of fulfillment. This life is the life of the Lord. That's the Good News. Life is infinitely better when it is lived united to Jesus Christ. Snakes will attack; poison will be forced down our throats. But we — the people of the ascended Lord — will beat it all off. How? “The Lord worked with them and confirmed the Word.” We don't wage this war alone. We fight with the might of the Lord Jesus Christ. And with Him on our side, how can we possibly lose?

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

**NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:**

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

**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.





**TAKING ON SNAKES AND POISONS OF THE WORLD:**

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus says to those gathered around: "These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" [Mark 16:15-20]. In some of the rural communities of our country, ministers and their congregations take this passage literally — as a test of faith some will plunge their hands into a box of rattlesnakes, pull one out and hold it in front of the congregation. Some will be bitten by the rattlers; some will die from the poison; some will survive.

Now these simple rural communities view the survivors as positive examples of the faith of the entire community. They view those who are bit by the snakes or who die from the poison as examples of the weakness of the community's faith. They are all wrong in interpreting Jesus' words literally — Jesus doesn't want us to challenge Him to heal us; nor does He want us to put ourselves in unnecessary peril. But they are correct in recognizing that faith in Jesus gives them the ability to conquer the evils of the world. And their communities are right when they credit success on the Lord and see failure as a result of lack of faith. But to base our faith in the Bible on the literal fundamentalism that demands that every word, every statement be believed exactly as it is written and read, is not sound theology. These interpretations often get so bogged down in the details that they miss the point of the message.

Here is an example. A young Mom takes her six year old to the beach. The mom keeps an eye on the little one playing in the water, when suddenly the child calls out: "Shark, Shark!" Mom runs into the water to protect the child, and the child just starts laughing. "This is not funny" the mom thinks; "I need to impress upon my child that it is wrong to call for help when you don't need it." So she tells the child the story of the boy who called wolf. You remember, the boy was a shepherd watching sheep, and he was bored. So he called wolf to get the attention of the townsfolk. Then he laughed when they came running, all concerned. He did this twice. The people came both times, but were furious that he was playing a bad joke. Then the boy really did see a wolf. He called for help again — only this time no one listened and he and the flock were attacked. Now, Mom tells this story to the six year old to impress upon the child the importance of only calling for help when it is needed.

And that is the point of the story. What the child's name was, the color of their hair, the country they were from — anything about the shepherd boy is not important. It is easy to miss the point of the story if we are bogged down in the incidentals. What was the message that Jesus was giving when He spoke about the signs of those who believed? The message was that His people could fight and conquer evil in its worst forms.

Jesus used snakes to represent the devil. His followers — those who believe in Him — could take on and beat off the devil. He used poison to represent the evil of the world — the poison that is hatred, materialism, prejudice, alcoholism, the drug culture, the sex culture, etc. Jesus said that His followers would be able to take on the poison of the world and defeat it. Then He ascended into heaven.

Peter and the boys didn't grieve that Jesus was gone. Mary Magdalene and the girls didn't resume their crying. No, once they understood, they were too busy — they got to work and proclaimed the wonders and the beauties of Jesus' life. The devil went after them in full battle array. He tortured them, and convinced others to expel them from their communities. He talked others into killing them. But the devil didn't win — he couldn't stop the work of the Kingdom of God. The followers of Jesus beat off the snake. All the evil of the world went to war against them. The poisons that destroy the soul and destroy life attacked them. The Christians didn't go into hiding. They took on the poison of the world



believe, to hope and to love."

Saint Paul is a realist. He knows that life has its joys and sorrows, that love is tested amid trials, and that hope can falter in the face of suffering. Even so, he can write: "We boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" [see Romans 5:3-4]. For the Apostle, trials and tribulations mark the lives of those who preach the Gospel amid incomprehension and persecution [see 2 Corinthians 6:3-10]. Yet in those very contexts, beyond the darkness we glimpse a light: we come to realize that evangelization is sustained by the power flowing from Christ's cross and resurrection. In this way, we learn to practice a virtue closely linked to hope — patience. In our fast-paced world, we are used to wanting everything now. We no longer have time simply to be with others; even families find it hard to get together and enjoy one another's company. Patience has been put to flight by frenetic haste, and this has proved detrimental, since it leads to impatience, anxiety, and even gratuitous violence, resulting in more unhappiness and self-centeredness.

Nor is there much place for patience in this age of the Internet, as space and time yield to an ever-present "now." Were we still able to contemplate creation with a sense of awe, we might better understand the importance of patience. We could appreciate the changes of the seasons and their harvests, observe the life of animals and their cycles of growth, and enjoy the clarity of vision of Saint Francis. In his *Canticle of the Creatures*, written exactly eight hundred years ago, Francis saw all creation as a great family and could call the sun his "brother" and the moon his "sister." A renewed appreciation of the value of patience could only prove beneficial for ourselves and for others. Saint Paul often speaks of patience in the context of our need for perseverance and confident trust in God's promises. Yet, before all else, he testifies to God's own patience, as "the God of all patience and encouragement" [Romans 15:5]. Patience, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, sustains our hope and strengthens it as a virtue and a way of life. May we learn to pray frequently for the grace of patience, which is both the daughter of hope and at the same time its firm foundation.

The Ordinary Jubilee will conclude with the closing of the Holy Door in the Papal Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican on January 6, 2026 — the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. During the Holy Year, may the light of Christian hope illumine every man and woman, as a message of God's love addressed to all! And may the Church bear faithful witness to this message in every part of the world!

—Francis

There are also many "particulars" of the jubilee year that are part of this document. Please see the Vatican website — [Vatican.va](http://Vatican.va) — for particular devotions, etc.

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

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

<b>Monday:</b>	Acts 19:1-8, John 16:29-33
<b>Tuesday:</b>	Acts 1:15-17, 20-26, John 15:9-17
<b>Wednesday:</b>	Acts 20:28-38, John 17:11b-19
<b>Thursday:</b>	Acts 22:30; 23:6-11, John 17:20-26
<b>Friday:</b>	Acts 25:13b-21, John 21:15-19
<b>Saturday:</b>	Acts 28:16-20, 30-31; John 21:20-25
<b>Pentecost Sunday</b>	Acts 2:1-11, 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23

**THE ONE BIBLE VERSE I ALWAYS PRAY WITH:**

There is no question I receive more from people online or at events than: “Hey Mark, what’s your favorite Bible verse?” Of course, questions about whether or not Matt Maher has more gray hair than I do come in as a close second — but I digress.

There is possibly no question easier to answer, yet more difficult.

Choosing one “favorite” Bible verse, for me, is like trying to choose a favorite child. It’s impossible — although, my favorite child is often the one who is not sugar-ed up and acting like a demoniac. You see, different “seasons” of life bring with them different needs and struggles, joys and failures. In this way and for this reason, every season has a different verse that I tend to lean on or look to for support, direction, or just plain hope.

I have several favorite verses, to be honest.

- After a long and tiring day of ministry, I find solace in “Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” [Nehemiah 8:10].
- When the Lord feels distant, or falls silent, I lean into: “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” [James 4:8].
- In those times when my family or I am suffering, I rush to: “he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away” [Revelation 21:4].
- In times where I’m overwhelmed with gratitude and God’s goodness, I turn to: “Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!” [Psalm 95:2]. I also love: “How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you?” [1 Thessalonians 3:9].
- In times of confusion, I lean on: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” [Proverbs 3:5-6].
- When the future looks bleak, I pray: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” [Romans 8:28] and: “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you” [Jeremiah 29:11-12]. I pray these until I actually trust in those words again.



Beyond all of these great nuggets of timeless wisdom, however, there is one verse that encapsulates each of these sentiments and more. It comes from the Prophet Isaiah, given to him at a time of great darkness, when he and his nation were falling into hopelessness: “Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand” [Isaiah 41:10].

I love this verse on so many levels. It is clear and concise. It is present and unwavering. It is strong, but still tender, challenging yet comforting. In short, it is everything a good Father should be.

There is no command more repeated in Scripture than “fear not.” The repetition of that command is not because God is forgetful, but because we are. God knows that we are often tempted to give in to fear. However, pay attention to the “why.” God tells us not to fear because He is with us.

Think about the first time you were left alone as a child or lost sight of your parent in a crowded store. Fear comes like a tidal wave. Yet that moment your eyes lock onto your parent again ushers in a reclaimed peace and security. How often in your life are you filled with fear? If we are present enough to the situation and aware enough to pray — and call God into the situation — that fear quickly turns to dust.

Pay close attention to what the Spirit is saying through the prophet Isaiah. Not only does God bid us not to fear, and remind us of His eternal — dare I even say “Eucharistic” — presence with us; He even tells us there is no reason to dismay, for He is God.

God is God — I am not. No matter how hard we try or how often we act like it, that simple truth brings freedom and peace. There is a God Who cares for me and about me and is with me and desires a relationship with me. What we call a storm, He calls a path. Moses didn’t part the sea, nor Peter tread upon it because they willed it — not because God did.

This second part of my favorite verse invites me — and you — to trust in God’s power over my own. God shifts the gears slightly, making three promises to us:

1. The Father will strengthen you.
2. The Father will help you.
3. The Father will uphold you.

You’d be wise to commit these promises and, actually, the entire verse to memory. Write them down in your own handwriting. Plaster them on your mirrors, your walls, your dashboard. Tattoo them on the insides of your eyelids if it’ll help you.

God’s not going anywhere. He will fight the battle for you [Exodus 14:14]. He will be our help, our rock, our fortress, and our deliverer [Psalm 18:2]. He will be there too, when we fall or jump into the pit and He will lift us out [Psalm 40:2]. Like a good father, He will take us by the hand and lead us to victory, as the verse promises in its conclusion.

People are often surprised when I share this “favorite verse” with them. It’s as though they think that I never doubt or struggle — like the person holding the microphone or writing the book must “have it all figured out.” To be clear, the only thing that I’ve figured out is that I have nothing figured out, except this: I need Jesus. I need Jesus more and more every day. I cannot imagine my life without Him nor would I want to do so.

Acknowledging your need for God does not make you weak — it makes you self-aware and honest. Admitting that you don’t have it all together does more than make you merely human — it makes you humble. The more you learn to look to and lean on God’s promises, the easier it becomes to trust in them and, ultimately, in Him.

I don’t share these verses, write, speak, or tweet because I have nothing better to do. I do it because I have no One better to share. I don’t have all the answers, but I know the Answer — and His Name is Jesus Christ.

If you’re still reading this, I’d like to end with a challenge. I cited about a dozen verses in parentheses above. More often than not when we read a blog or chapter we don’t actually take the time to look verse citations up for yourself. I’d like to ask you to do it this time. Grab your own Bible and highlighter. Open to each and let God’s truth pierce your heart and penetrate your soul in a new way.

Ultimately, it doesn’t matter what my favorite verse is — it’s about whether or not I let the Word of God dwell in me richly [see Colossians 3:16] — and whether you do. Life is not a wrestling match of “God versus you” but, rather a love story where God verses you — all you have to do is turn His holy page each day and let Him.

Happy reading.

—taken from the writings of Mark Hart, the Bible Geek