

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer of a Lover ~

Dear Jesus,
I make a fresh and strong commitment
today to live the life of love,
to let the tenderness of God
flow through me
and heal the wounded hearts of those I meet.

O Father,
teach me to love
even when things go wrong.
To be patient and kind
when the children are underfoot.
To overlook the spiteful words of family.
To rejoice when someone is blessed.
Teach me to talk in love,
to lay gossip quietly aside
and to take up words of grace instead.

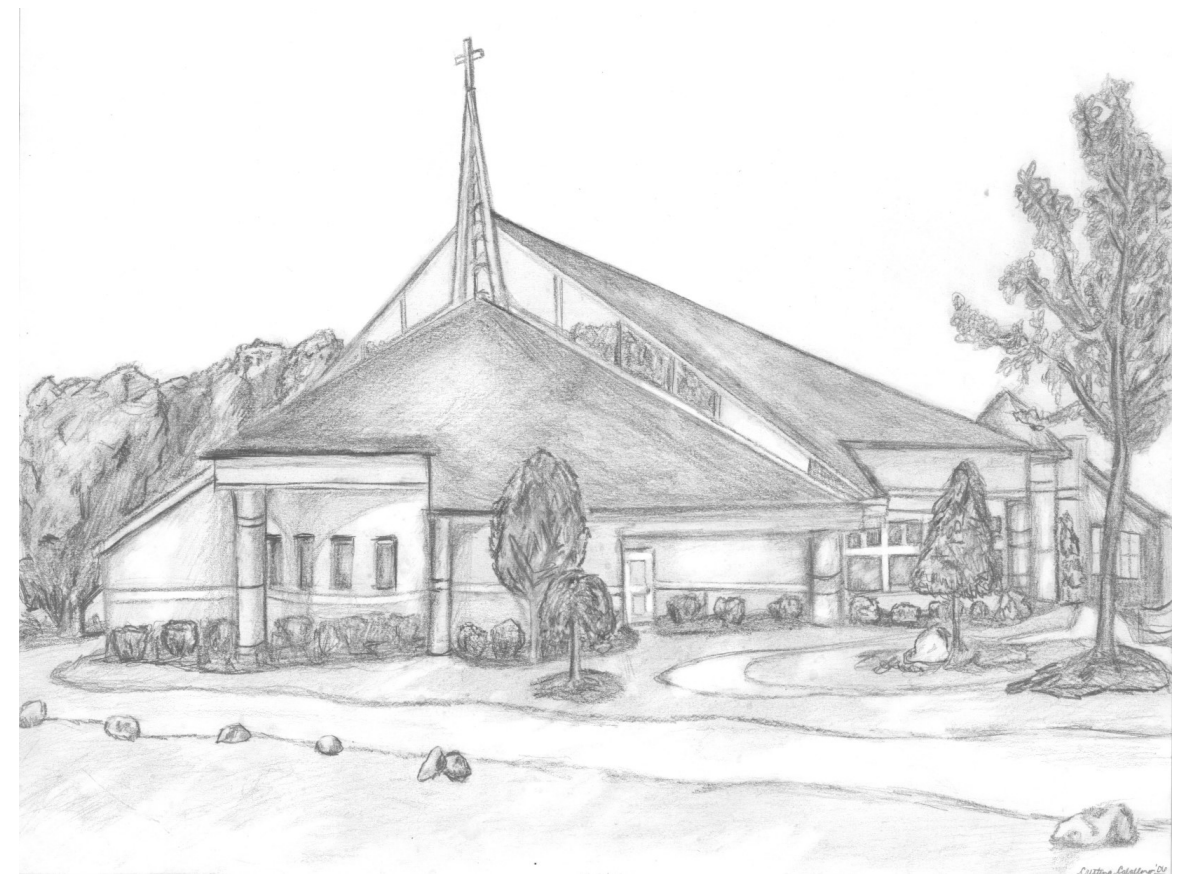
O Lord,
Your love is already inside me
Resting in my heart.
Give me the grace
To remove every obstacle
that would keep that love
from flowing freely into the lives of others.
put resentments behind me,
and help me to forgive
all those who have done me wrong.

cause me to increase and overflow
with Your love.
Cause me to be
what this world needs most of all —
a living example of love.
Amen.

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

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

Our Lady Chapel



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

THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY:

We want to put this on your radar — **Thursday, August 15th** is the **Feast of the Assumption** of Mary into heaven — a **holy day of obligation**. When the course of her earthly life was completed, the Blessed Virgin Mary was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of his Body. [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #974]. **Mass schedule for the holyday will be slightly different from years past because of our Student Orientation Meeting: Wednesday, vigil Mass at 5:30 PM., and Thursday's Mass will be at 12:30 PM. There will be NO 5:30 PM Mass on Thursday. All Masses will be in the main chapel.**

**BLESSING OF STUDENTS — AUGUST 17-18:**

The school year is quickly upon us. Many college students are preparing to leave another year of advanced study, and high school and elementary students are gearing up for another of study, friendship and extracurriculars. Orientations and welcome back adventures are right around the corner. As a faith community, we want your school year — no matter what level — to be filled with the joy and excitement of life, as well as the presence of God. Join us for this special blessing next weekend at our Masses.

**FAITH EDUCATION REGISTRATION :**

All children who will be part of our Faith Education program need to register [even if you were a part of the program last year]. Our Sessions go from **8:45—9:45 AM, on Sunday mornings**, with the hope that our children would then **participate in our 10:00 AM Family Mass. Register your family by contacting Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560].** Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.

**O.C.I.A [Order of Christian Initiation for Adults]:**

We are beginning to plan for our OCIA program [formerly known as RCIA] which will begin shortly. Why the name change? OCIA refers to the entire journey of faith discernment, whereas RCIA refers only to the Ritual aspects of the journey.



If you know someone who has been away from the Catholic Church for a while, or who is interested in learning more about the Catholic faith, or who presently is not a Catholic but would like to pursue this avenue of faith; or investigate it; if you know someone who is not fully initiated [Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation] in their Catholic faith — then consider having them join our OCIA program. **Please contact Father John [440-473-3560] for more information.**

LIFE IS A BIG CIRCLE:

The practice of loving kindness must find its root deep within us. The story is told that Mohandas Gandhi once settled in a village and at once began serving the needs of the villagers who lived there. A friend inquired if Gandhi's objectives in serving the poor were purely humanitarian. Gandhi replied: "Not at all — I am here to serve no one else but myself, to find my own self-realization through the service of these village folk." As Gandhi wisely points out, even as we serve others we are working on ourselves; every act, every word, every gesture of genuine compassion naturally nourishes our own hearts as well. It is not a question of who is healed first. When we attend to ourselves with compassion and mercy, more healing is made available for others. And when we serve others with an open and generous heart, great healing comes to us.

—Wayne Muller

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 political polarization.
- 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.

THE BREAD OF LIFE — INFINITE WISDOM:

John's Gospel [6:41-51] begins with the Jews murmuring about Jesus because he said he came down from heaven — after all, they know him as the son of Joseph. Jesus responds with the striking claim that he comes from the Father whom he alone has seen. Jesus goes on to identify himself as "the living bread that comes down from heaven," — adding that "whoever eats this bread will live forever."

Scripture scholars tell us that Jesus' teaching on Bread of Life in John's Gospel reflects the Old Testament teaching on divine wisdom as our food or bread. Jesus is the One who teaches divine wisdom — the Son who knows the secrets of the Father, the Word who reveals the life-giving truths of God. He is himself the wisdom of the Father, the parable of God, the embodiment of divine truth. By his example and teaching, he guides us to a richer life on earth and to the fullness of life in heaven — He is the living bread that enlightens our mind and illumines the path to spiritual growth.

A composite story highlights this point. Junia — a woman in her early fifties — lived for over a decade with extreme anger at her older brother who cheated her out of her fair share of the family inheritance when their father died. Obsessed with the cruel injustices of her brother's shady maneuvers, she held tight to vengeful feelings that led to depression, sleepless nights, and unwarranted angry outbursts directed at her family and friends.

One Sunday, Junia heard a homily on forgiveness that presented Jesus as the great reconciler, who taught forgiveness by example — forgiving his executioners — and by word — the Lord's Prayer. The preacher went on to say that harboring angry thoughts toward others poisons our hearts and can cause emotional problems. The only antidote to this poison is forgiveness which does not demand forgetting injustice; rather it involves viewing offenders as more than their hurtful deeds and allowing them to begin again with us.

Reflecting on the sermon, Junia simply decided to forgive her brother and succeeded in taking away his power to continue to hurt her. She immediately began to feel better — more peaceful and less agitated. Junia now knows — not theoretically, but experientially — that Christ is indeed the living bread, the Wisdom of the Father, who reveals to us the deepest truths about human existence and teaches us how to live wisely and fruitfully.

What have you learned from Christ that helps you to live wisely? How can you appropriate more of the infinite wisdom of God?

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

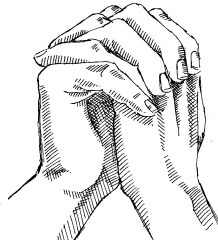


PRAYER REQUESTS:

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 Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian [*09], Rosa [*12] and Edwin [*17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- For Debbie Langer, friend of Cindy Frimel, who was diagnosed with brain cancer.
- For Nada Kucmanic, who is seriously ill from cancer
- For Josephine Fernando, who is seriously ill.
- For Sean O’Toole, Gilmour Athletic Director, father of Owen [*18], Connor [*20], Kelsey [*24], and former Gilmour student, Erin, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Mary Vislosky, who is seriously ill as a result of bone cancer.
- For Brother Joseph LeBon, C.S.C., who is under the care of hospice.
- For Cathy Force, mother of Erika DiCello Lacroix [*90], Grandmother of Andre [*23] and AJ [*25] Lacroix, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Lawrence Wynn, Gilmour Strength and Conditioning Coach, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Agnes Mirando, grandmother of David [*12], Agnes [*14], and Matthew [*25] Mirando, who is terminally ill.
- For Barb Zachary, sister of Father Rick Gribble, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Brother Tom Maddix, C.S.C., who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For Terry DeBacco, mother of Michelle Chiacchiari [*96], mother-in-law of Mark Chiacchiari [*94], grandmother of Aurelia [*28], and Olivia [*30] Chiacchiari, who is undergoing rehab following a fall
- 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



PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Brother Carl Smith, C.S.C.
- For Brother Edward Dailey, C.S.C.
- For Sandra Mugavin, aunt of Denise Shade.
- For Dale Slavin, former Gilmour Art Teacher
- For Nathan Mitchell
- For Carl Titgemeier, father of John [*81], grandfather of Brigid Kozlowski [*08]
- For Lawrence Kaiser, father of Larry [*79] and Terry [*83] Kaiser
- For Helen and Steve Parisi. Helen is a former state-fund co-ordinator at Gilmour.
- For Denise Marzano.
- For Thomas Kewley [*51], brother of Pat Kewley [*50]
- For Sister Dorothy Tecca, C.S.A.
- For Jean Paul Lavalley, uncle of Kalie Lavalley [*26]
- For Sister Ruth Behrend, O.S.U.

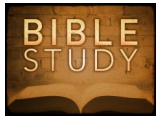
KNOW THIS:

If it’s true we are alone, we are alone together, the way blades of grass are alone, but exist as a field.

18 —Rosemerry Trommer

NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, August 21st:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, August 21st 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: Praying with Scripture

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, August 11: 19 th Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, August 12:	NO MASS
Tuesday, August 13:	NO MASS
Wednesday, August 14: Vigil of the Assumption of Mary	5:30 PM In-Person & Live Stream
Thursday, August 15: Assumption of Mary	12:30 PM In-Person & Live Stream
Friday, August 16:	NO MASS
Saturday, August 17: 20 th Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, August 18: 20 th Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — AUGUST 17th:

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.

Please let us know in the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you would like more information or if you would like to help. This is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

Our lives are journey from the known through the “now” of today toward the “then” of mystery. As we go through this journey, we ask for God’s grace to free us from those memories, events, and demons which can haunt us. We are accompanied by the nourishing presence of God which empowers us to do God’s will — and so our journeys are sacred. It is this presence that encourages us and strengthens us to keep going. We celebrate the Eucharist so that the bland of the bread — and the at-times bland of our lives — are transformed. Jesus is sent to embrace our past, encourage our now, and offer us to His world as the gifts we are. This is the truth of our life and we need to be present to it.

For Elijah, life was charmed. Many miracles accompanied his being the prophet of the Lord. But things did not always go his way — or at least it seemed that way to him. Currently, Elijah is on the run [1 Kings 19:1-8]. Jezebel had moved Israel’s religious alliance to Baal — a fertility god. She had created a large group of prophets to support that cult. Elijah is sent to confront this arrangement — and he does. He challenges the prophets to a bull-burning contest. They fix a bull for a sacrifice to Baal and then they call down the power of Baal to set fire to the pile of wood and flesh. Elijah prepares a similar fixing. All the people of Israel gather around and fall to their faces in submission and belief when the God of Israel sets fire to Elijah’s preparation, but the bull of Baal remains uncooked.

But the story does not end there. Elijah marches these one hundred and fifty false prophets out into the desert and slaughters them all. When Jezebel hears of this, she promises to kill Elijah, and so he flees for his life. After one day of his journey through rough terrain, Elijah was exhausted, and sought shelter under a tree. He prayed for death — “this is enough, O Lord! Take my life.” Elijah falls asleep, and while he slept, God intervened by sending an angelic messenger to provide bread and water for Elijah. The message was “eat, drink, and go on with the journey. Elijah responded by going back to sleep. Again, God sent a messenger — bread and water again provided — with the message: “Go to the holy mountain, Horeb.” Elijah, with renewed by God’s touching him, discovers energy and walks for forty days and nights to reach the mountain. God cared for him, and so he gets up and goes on.

How often we hear the phrase “God will provide.” God does come to our aid. We receive what we need to persevere. Sometimes we lack only sustenance; at other times, when we are pressed down, we need more. We seek the sense that God is with us on our journey, and deeply loves us. We can then eat, drink, and be spiritually energized by God’s love as we continue our mission with renewed zeal. We clearly can never live “by bread alone.”

Paul’s letter to the Church at Ephesus, affirms this spiritual nourishment that we receive. Even though he was persecuted and often imprisoned, Paul provides us with an amazing exhortation to purge ourselves of all bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling” [Ephesians 4:30-5:2]. The sum of our core mission as Christians is also contained in Paul’s letter: “Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ.” We certainly can make these words come alive in our daily actions. We can do this and remain God-loving agents of change in our modern world.

We are now in the middle of our reflection on John’s Gospel treatment of the Eucharist. We have seen the multiplication of the loaves and the fish; we have seen Jesus send His disciples across the lake while He prayed; a storm comes up and Jesus comes to them — walking on water — to calm their fears and the storm. When they arrive on the other side of the lake, the crowd who had been fed met them wanting a little more of the action. Murmuring and confusion ensue. The crowd cannot understand Jesus’ words about His being from God and His being nourishment for eternal life [John 6:41-51].

**IS GOD’S GPS FAULTY?**

There is no doubt that strength and determination are needed in following God for a lifetime. Especially true is the evangelist John’s belief that the Eucharist is a major force in our maintaining that strength and determination. But the story of Elijah brings up a unique problem in our following of God [1 Kings 19:1-8]. Elijah discovers that God doesn’t always lead him along the most direct route — sometimes God even changes his destination!

Elijah’s story begins with a confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of the fertility god Ba’al on Mt. Carmel. Elijah wins the confrontation, has his rivals put to death, then must quickly run for his life when Queen Jezebel — the pagan prophets’ patroness — puts a contract out on him. He travels on foot from Palestine’s northernmost point — Mt. Carmel — to its southernmost point — the Sinai. Physically unable to go any further, Elijah actually asks God to kill him — “Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.” Fortunately, God ignores his request and twice sends an angel with a “hearth cake and a jug of water,” making certain the prophet has enough strength to “walk forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb — Mt. Sinai.”

And here is where the difficulty arises. When Elijah finally reaches Mt. Sinai, God comes to him in a “gentle breeze” and abruptly informs him that he’s in the wrong place! Instead of preaching to the scorpions in the wilderness, the Lord wants him in Syria — north of where he originally started his trek — setting up a mechanism to get rid of Jezebel [see 1 Kings 19].

At first glance, this change in direction makes sense. All of us have had to make changes in the paths we’ve chosen in life. But there’s a unique problem with this change — by twice sending an angel with food and water, God actually helped Elijah go in the wrong direction! Since the prophet couldn’t have made it to Sinai without God’s assistance, God is responsible for Elijah’s ending up in a place that God didn’t want him to be.

The Pauline disciple who wrote Paul’s letter to the Church at Ephesus makes sense when he encourages his readers to get rid of “all bitterness, fury, anger, shouting and reviling” [Ephesians 4:30-5:2], for we all need to be “kind to one another, compassionate, and forgiving.” Yet Elijah would remind us that true discipleship goes further than just creating peaceful, compassionate relationships with one another — it also must include developing a relationship with a God who sometimes messes with our spiritual GPS.

Jewish members of John’s community had to deal with a parallel experience when they converted to Christianity. As good Jews, they had been constantly encouraged to distinguish between the “sacred and the profane.” We presume that through the centuries it was God who helped the Chosen People reach the point in their faith lives when that sacred/profane division became an essential part of everyone and everything they encountered. Yet now, as followers of the risen Jesus, they’ve discovered that the most sacred of persons is actually in an individual whose “father and mother we know.” No dedicated Israelite could ever have anticipated that God would one day ask his/her followers to drastically change directions and realize that a carpenter from Capernaum had become the “bread of life” for all people.

Almost every biblical author encourages us to surface the distinct path God wishes us to travel through life. Yet, Elijah’s Sinai experience also teaches us to keep our eyes and ears open — willing to change directions at any moment that the Lord’s breezy voice breaks into our lives.

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

WORDS OF WISDOM:

Sometimes you can have the smallest role in the smallest production and still have a big impact.

—Neil Harris

and/or sin, // and then you see the clouds and stare holes into heaven, // looking for Christ // when He's really at your shoulder looking for you // and in such great shape, you'd never believe what he's been through. // Then before you know how it happened, it's July again or August // and you have time to do what you should have been doing all your life, // sitting or walking on the grass in bare feet // and loving. ... // Then you're all petals once more, and tendrils // till the storm breaks // your heart.

And the biggest piece goes to heaven, and to hell with the weather.

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

WHY DON'T TEENS PRAY MORE?

Why don't teens pray more? And why is that teens are more scared to praise God when their friends are around? This is a question that is easy to answer, but difficult to hear. I've been blessed enough to meet and speak to hundreds of thousands of teens over the past few years, and this fear exists everywhere — in every state and on every continent, it seems. Now, that is not to say that this fear exists in everyone — again, I said every “where”.

People will give you other opinions and “takes” on this issue. They'll blame it on geography saying that “our teens don't pray like that in this part of the country”. Others will blame it on the lack of “leadership” — from musicians, to priests, to youth ministers. Still others blame it all on their parents. Some people choose to point the finger at the Church in Rome, some at their local Bishop, and some at the parish [for lack of opportunities, programs or concern].

The reality?

Any one of those people or situations might influence the manner in which God is presented to teenagers, but none of them can keep a teen — or anyone, for that matter — from prayer. Prayer is a turning of the heart to God, and no one can stop a humble heart from seeking, finding, knowing and loving God. Worship is a response to God's love and greatness. Again, no one can stop you [or any one for that matter] from worshipping.

The truth is that teens are scared to praise God when their friends are around because deep down most people really do care about what others think — more than what God thinks. That's why, in my opinion, at the beginning of a youth conference, for instance, only about five or ten percent of the teens might have their hands raised in worship, but by the end probably almost ninety percent do. Peer pressure always has an effect — it can be both positive and negative. We look at those peers on our left and on our right, and let those people influence our behavior. That is a way of life here on earth.

Praise and worship, however, aren't about life on earth — it's about entering into the throne room of Heaven — it's not about the left and right; it's about the up and the down. Prayer is where Heaven and earth collide — you turn your heart, mouth, eyes and ears to heaven, to better enable yourself to life [and survive] on earth.

Let me give you an example of God' hope and expectation of us when it comes to praise and worship — one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all who dwell in the world show reverence” [Psalm 33:8]. “At the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” [Philippians 2:10-11].

The sooner that any of us — teens or adults can start thinking and living more for God than others in our lives and prayer, the sooner we will resemble and exemplify the kind of children of God we were created, designed, and called to become.

Keep praying, and, if it helps, close your eyes when you pray. That's what I do. Not only does it eliminate distractions of those around you, but it offers example of how to quiet yourself amidst a world of chaos. Heaven is only a prayer away.

—taken from the writings of Mark Hart which appear on the internet.



The feeding of the multitude forms a stage setting for this debate with the Jewish leaders who religiously remember the feeding of the Israelites in the desert after the Exodus. As a fellow Jew, Jesus also knows well of this event in their history. And so, Jesus reminds them of a past deed, once done, and the ever-presenting nourishment which He is. They believe they know Him, but He knows them too and speaks to them the new words of God's old love.

John's Gospel presents Jesus often as saying “I am” proclamations. When He came to the foundering boat on the lake after the feeding, Jesus calmed their fears by saying simply, “Fear not, I am.” Jesus tells His friends that He is the bread come down from heaven — the “bread of life” — and that those who do eat of His absolute totality will have eternal life.

John does not present a narrative of Jesus' instituting the Eucharist at the Last Supper. This was not an important issue at the time of the Gospel's being written. What was important — and still remains important — is the acceptance or taking into one's life, the person and life of Jesus. For John, the real presence of Jesus is bigger than the transformation of “bread” and “wine” — Jesus is offering Himself as human and divine and His loving desire for all men and women to take him into their lives for the journey of life. The living in Christ and Christ living in the lives of all humanity is why He came. The past deeds of God are being continued in Jesus — Who came that we may have life. And life is this — believing that He was and is sent into the world.

In running for his life, Elijah wanted to give it all up; the apostles were being swamped with fear. Most of us have been there and were tempted to do that as well. God sends angels to “touch” us — GOD gives us “Bread from Heaven” and always the urging to “get up and eat” and then get up and get on with the living. Our comfort is more than that we receive the Eucharist — it's that we have taken Him into our lives and allowed Him to sweep us from underneath the “broom tree”, keeping us as His real presence in our real days.

Elijah moaned: “This is enough, O Lord! Take my life.” Jesus says to us: “I am enough! You take my life, eat it all, live it all and you will be already living the eternal life I came and come to share.”

—edited from the writings of Tom Quinn, Mike Cherney, and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

OPEN YOURSELF TO GOD:

To pray means to open your hands before God. It means slowly relaxing the tension that squeezes your hands together and accepting your existence with an increasing readiness, not as a possession to defend, but as a gift to receive. Above all, prayer is a way of life that allows you to find stillness in the midst of the world where you open your hands to God's promises and find hope for yourself, your neighbor, and your world. In prayer, you encounter God not only in the small voice and the soft breeze, but also in the midst of the turmoil of the world, in the distress and joy of your neighbor, and in the loneliness of your own heart.

Prayer leads you to see new paths and to hear new melodies in the air. Prayer is the breath of your life that gives you freedom to go and to stay where you wish, to find the many signs that point out the way to a new land. Praying is not simply some necessary compartment in the daily schedule of a Christian or a source of support in a time of need, nor is it restricted to Sunday mornings or mealtimes. Praying is living. It is eating and drinking, acting and resting, teaching and learning, playing and working. Praying pervades every aspect of our lives. It is the unceasing recognition that God is wherever we are, always inviting us to come closer and to celebrate the divine gift of being alive.

In the end, a life of prayer is a life with open hands — a life where we need not be ashamed of our weaknesses but realize that it is more perfect for us to be led by the Other than to try to hold everything in our own hands.

—Henri Nouwen



GIVE US BREAD FOR ETERNAL LIFE: WE BECOME CHRIST:

Recently I received an e-mail telling me about cactus plants, a topic that had not in the past provoked much interest on my part. After all, I pictured them to be gawkish and unattractive, although I have seen some cacti that appeared to have surrealistic heads and arms resembling human forms that exercised my imagination. Nevertheless, I read on.

Pictures came as attachments to that e-mail, and when I opened them up and viewed those pictures, I was delighted to find that cacti produce stunningly beautiful blossoms, all of which brought me to reassess my judgments about cactus plants. Evidently there was a whole lot more to them than I thought. My “know-it-all” previous judgments about cacti completely blocked me from seeing the beauty that lay hidden within them.

That lesson can be applied to the way we see people — especially people about whom we have a “know-it-all” attitude. All of us are familiar with



what happened to us when we grew from being teenagers and in the following years became adults. Too often in our teen years we judged our parents to be “out of it” — lacking in understanding and compassion, overbearing, and uncaring. It wasn’t until we were well into our twenties that we newly discovered their wisdom and good parenting. The problem, of course, is not limited to teens; there are plenty of adult “know-it-alls” in our lives — “know-it-alls” who by their attitudes are blinded about others and thus deprived to seeing and enjoying the beauty that can be found within them.

Such is the case presented to us by John in the Gospel for this 19th Week in Ordinary Time. The Jews murmured about Jesus because he said: “I am the bread that came down from heaven,” and they said: “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” [John 6:41-51].

Did Jesus’ miracles mean nothing to them? Did the account of His birth not interest them at all? Did His teachings leave them totally unimpressed? Evidently nothing about Jesus mattered except their own judgments about Him — all of which should cause us to ask ourselves about our own perceptions of Jesus and our own understandings of what He is telling us.

Jesus presents himself to us as the Bread of Life — the sustenance of His life to be made a part of ours. In receiving Him in the Eucharist, we are, at the same time, being received into His life. His life and ours are commingled in a holy communion.

That’s more than just a nice thought, because it means that our concerns become His concerns just as much as His concerns become ours. The challenges we face become challenges He faces with us — a wonderful truth that should not only give us comfort but that should empower us and energize us.

Our Blessed Lord faced a world that didn’t care about the poor, didn’t help the suffering, and didn’t give most of thought to what God wants of us. In our world today we have people who suffer at the hands of powerful men and women who are motivated solely by their own self-interest, their own greed. Their attitudes and actions have hurt many, many people — including people who perhaps we know. We need the nourishment and the strength given us by the Bread of Life to cope with joblessness, the drug culture, the suffering of those who have been abused, terrorism, and the draining away of our nation’s resources. We need the Bread of Life to help others who have been diminished by these forces. But most of all, we need the Bread of Life to sustain us in our own daily challenges.

MEETING GOD WITHOUT FEAR:

What would you feel if God suddenly walked into a room? Fear? Shame? Joy? Apprehension? Panic? A desire to hide? Relief when God finally left? Indeed, how would we even recognize God should God walk into a room? Jane Tyson Clement — a poet and a member of the Bruderhof community — fantasizes about what might run through her mind and heart if Jesus suddenly walked up to her. In a poem entitled, *Vigil*, she writes: What would I do, O Master, // if you came slowly out of the woods. // Would I know your step? // Would I know by my beating heart? // Would I know by your eyes? // Would I feel on my shoulder too, the burden you carry? // Would I rise and stand still till you drew near or cover my eyes in shame? // Or would I simply forget everything // except that you had come and were here?

Those last lines highlight the most important of all truths — namely, that God is love and only by letting that kind of love into our lives can we save ourselves from disappointment, shame, and sadness.

I don’t often remember my dreams, nor do I set much stock by them. But several years ago, I had a dream that I both remember and set some stock in. It went something like this: For whatever reason — and dreams don’t give you a reason — I was asked to go to an airport and pick up Jesus, who was arriving on a flight. I was understandably nervous and frightened. A bevy of apprehensions beset me — How would I recognize him? What would he look like? How would he react to me? What would I say to him? Would I like what I saw? More frightening yet, would he like what he saw when he looked at me?

With those feelings surging through me, I stood — as one stands in a dream — at the end of a long corridor nervously surveying the passengers who were walking towards me. How would I recognize Jesus and would his first glance at me reflect his disappointment?

But this was a good dream, and it taught me as much about God as I’d learned in all my years of studying theology. All of my fears were alleviated in a second. What happened was the opposite of all my expectations. Suddenly, walking down the corridor towards me was Jesus, smiling, beaming with delight, coming straight for me, rushing, eager to meet me. Everything about him was stunningly and wonderfully disarming. There was no awkward moment; everything about him erased that. His eyes, his face, and his body embraced me without reserve and without judgement. I knew he saw straight through me, knew all my faults and weaknesses, my lack of substance, and none of it mattered.



And, for that moment, none of it mattered to me either. Jesus was eager to meet me! In that moment, as Jane Tyson Clement suggests, one forgets everything — except that God is here. There’s no place for fear or shame or wondering what God thinks of you.

And that’s a lesson we must somehow learn — somehow experience.

We live with too much fear of God. Partly its bad theology, but mostly we fear because we’ve never experienced the kind of love that’s manifest in God, and we take for granted that anyone who sees us as we really are — in our unloveliness, weaknesses, pathology, sin, insubstantiality — will, in the end, be as disappointed with us as we are with ourselves.

At the end of the day we expect that God is disappointed with us and will greet us with a frown. The tragedy and sadness here is that, because we think that God is disappointed in us — especially at those times when we are disappointed with ourselves — we try to avoid meeting the one person, one love, and the one energy. But God actually understands us, accepts us, delights in us, and is eager to smile at us. We are relieved that we never have to pick up Jesus at an airport. That’s also true of church — we stay away from church exactly at those times when we would most need to be there.

A prairie poet and former Oblate confrere, Harry Hellman, gets the last word on this. He puts it well: Let’s go back to the weather. // Most days you don’t notice there is any // until you fall into love,

THE OBSTACLE OF EXPECTATIONS:

“Where did that come from?” “Who does she think she is?” We make those, and more creative, sometimes less polite, comments when somebody throws us off balance. We wander around our little worlds with expectations — conscious and unconscious — that are our own scripts for others to act out. It can be quite upsetting when they don’t fit the roles we’ve assigned them.

For example, when we read or hear John 6, did it strike you as odd that Jesus’ critics were upset because he said that he had come down from heaven, but that they didn’t seem at all bothered by his calling himself bread? Of course, in John’s Gospel, Jesus also called himself living water, the light of the world, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the image of God, the true vine, and the way, the truth and the life. Jesus had great expectations for his vocation.

In John’s Gospel for this 19th Week in Ordinary Time, we see a problem of clashing expectations — Jesus’ compatriots and kin may have been thrilled with what he did, but when he declared that he had come from heaven, that was too much. They knew exactly where he had come from. Even if they admired Joseph and Mary, they didn’t consider them heavenly emissaries who had brought a son to Earth [John 6:41-51]. They knew enough about life to know what to expect from one another.

The underlying conflict between Jesus and his audience was that he wanted to open their minds and hearts to more than what they already had and knew, but they felt safe and secure with life as it was — “Why fix it if it’s not broken?” The roles they expected to play out in their own lives were as constrained as those they put on others: “It is what it is.”

They were a bit like Elijah. Elijah, the target of an assassination plot, had decided to flee, only to soon come to the realization that it was best to give up — “This is enough, Lord, let me die here and now, before they catch up with me!” [1 Kings 19:1-8]. But God had greater hopes for him, and sent an angel to wake him up and give him food from heaven. Elijah appreciated that and still wanted to let it all come to an end, then and there. But the pesky angel woke him up again, telling him to eat more because he had a long road ahead of him. This time, he couldn’t refuse and went to where God would reveal Himself to him.

It’s significant that the angel’s job was to wake up Elijah and give him food. It’s another way of saying that God’s messenger prodded him toward a larger vision of things and promised he could find the strength to move beyond his hopelessness — walking 40 days to get there. We often think of hopelessness as despair or depression. But it is also complacency and a lack of vision. This might be a way of explaining what St. Paul is saying when he writes to the Church at Ephesus: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” [Ephesians 4:30-5:2].

The Holy Spirit calls us into a future beyond our expectations and imagination — no matter that we might prefer our own secure, if not always comfortable, ruts. Accepting Paul’s call to be forgiving requires an attitude of openness to the future, a willingness to break free of memories and expectations that only replicate the past in new clothes.

Jesus says that we can’t come to him unless the Father draws us and that “everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him, comes to me.” Listening to Jesus, allowing him to draw us into new perspectives is what it means to be “taught by God.”

Our Creator and Father is the God of the future far more than the past — “Your ancestors ate manna”, but “I am the living bread.” The Word become flesh is God’s invitation into a new and eternal future.

Last week’s liturgy invited us to feel our deepest hungers and to ask how Christ wants to satisfy them. This week’s liturgy warns us that our expectations may be the greatest obstacle keeping us from knowing what God keeps offering us. The Gospel intends to throw us off balance. We can resist and hold on to what we think we know, or we can risk our equilibrium and be taught by God.

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



In an increasingly secularized world, our children need now more than ever to draw closer to Christ. They need to draw Christ closer to themselves, to receive the Bread of Life in order to strengthen their resolve and guide them in making decisions. Their minds need to be fed and their hearts need to be filled with the Word of God made flesh for us. We need the Bread of Life just as much as did the people of Jesus’ day.

It’s no secret that teens are altruistic. They quest for the best — they expect their parents to be the best, their friends to be true to them, and our world to be a whole lot better than it is. God loves them and wants to be fully a part of their lives. I hope teens never lose their idealism. Many adults have abandoned and lost their ideals, and thereby messed up our world — really messed it up. In adjusting to reality, I hope teens will not lose their vision of what can be and thus merely settle for what is. I know that receiving the Bread of Life — receiving our Lord in the Eucharist — will give them that for which they hunger and seek.

Jesus cared, deeply cared, for the poor, the downtrodden, the sick, the elderly, and those cast off by this world’s well to do. The Bread of Life we receive in the Eucharist will inspire and motivate us to have the same attitude as Christ’s. And as for our human experience of pain and suffering, for what more could we ask than Christ living in us and we living in Christ?

The life our Blessed Lord offers us is for our salvation, to be sure, but it is also for the benefit of those around us. Jesus was sent into our world by His Father in heaven, and Jesus, in turn, sends us also into the world, not to condemn it, but to save it. We are here today to receive, and then be sent.

St. Teresa of Avila once pointed out a truth that has deeply affected me — a truth that remains central to my life. It is reported she said: “Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks with compassion out on this world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good; yours are the hands with which He is to bless the lives of others now.”

Whenever we gather at Mass, we all receive the Bread of Life in Holy Communion — a communion that is ours, not individually mine nor individually yours. We pray the Lord’s Prayer — that wonderful prayer that begins with the word “Our.” We receive our Lord in Holy Communion in order to be sent, in order to share Christ’s compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and love in a world filled with junk food, populated by people who have a hunger within them that this world can never satisfy. In your love, bring them the Bread of Life in your life. “Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks with compassion out on this world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours. Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good; yours are the hands with which He is to bless men now.”

Receive Christ and take Him into the days that are ahead of you and into the lives of those you will encounter in those days.

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

GOD AND CREATION:

Each and every creature is a unique word of God, with its own message, its own metaphor, its own energetic style, and its own way of showing forth goodness, beauty, and participation in the Great Mystery. Each creature has its own glow and its own unique glory. To be a contemplative is to be able to see each epiphany, to enjoy it, protect it, and draw upon it for the common good.

Sister Ilia Delio, OSF writes in true Franciscan style: “The world is created as a means of God’s self-revelation so that, like a mirror or footprint, it might lead us to love and praise the Creator. We are created to read the book of creation so that we may know the Author of Life. This book of creation is an expression of who God is; it is meant to lead humans to what it signifies — namely, the eternal Trinity of dynamic, self-diffusive love.” Meister Eckhart, OP, says it even more succinctly: “Anyone who truly knows creatures may be excused from listening to sermons — for every creature is full of God, and is a book.”

— Father Richard Rohr, OFM

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE EUCHARIST:

It is often said that it is better to give than to receive, but it is usually more difficult to receive than to give. The person who gives is in charge, independent, and has the satisfaction of helping and supporting another. The person who receives is in a different situation. The one who receives becomes indebted to the person who gives. A bond of responsibility is formed. This is why usually in giving and receiving we try to make things mutual. We all know the experience of exchanging gifts and feeling a bit uneasy when we realize that someone has given us a gift that is much nicer than the one we bought for them. We understand when someone is presented with a wonderful gift and says: “I can’t accept this.” To accept would make the person too indebted to the other. Receiving a gift changes us. It binds us in responsibility to the one who gives.

Tommy was eight years old and blind from birth. He lived in the Midwest with a loving family who was always on the lookout for a way to improve his medical condition. When the family heard of a surgeon at Massachusetts General Hospital who had developed a new surgical technique that could help Tommy, they pooled together their resources and sent the boy and his mother to Boston. The only thing that Tommy insisted on bringing with him was his teddy bear. It had been his companion from birth. To a boy who could not see, its presence and touch gave him security and courage. The bear remained tucked under his arm through every test and medical procedure. It even went with him into the operating room wrapped in its own sterile plastic bag.

When the bandages were removed from Tommy’s eyes, it became clear that the operation had been a success. For the first time in his life Tommy was able to see light, color, his mother’s face, and indeed the teddy bear that he had clutched to for so many years. After weeks of follow-up in the hospital it was time for him to return home. When the doctor came in for the last visit, Tommy spoke up first. “Doctor,” he said, “I want to pay you for helping me.” He extended to the physician his teddy bear. The doctor froze. He did not anticipate such a gift. He knew that if he accepted it, it would change him. Accepting this remarkable gift from the child would bring their relationship to a new level. But sizing up the situation correctly, he rallied himself and graciously received what was offered. To this day you can find that bear on the tenth floor of Massachusetts General Hospital. It is in a glass case in the corridor. Next to the bear is the business card of the surgeon. On the card is a note that reads: “This is the highest fee I ever received in exchange for professional services.”

Receiving something of great value changes us. It binds us to the giver. It makes us responsible. That is why when we receive the Eucharist, we should understand what has been given to us and what that gift entails. Jesus says in John’s gospel: “I am the living bread that has come down from heaven” [John 6:41-51]. The Eucharist is the gift of Jesus’ very self. If the gift of a teddy bear touches our hearts, how much more should the gift of the Bread of Life change our lives. When we receive the Eucharist, it makes us profoundly indebted to God. It also makes us responsible to build God’s kingdom, to see that God’s will is done on earth.

The bread, which is the sign of the Eucharist, is also the sign of what that responsibility entails. Every piece of bread is a sign of our connectedness to the rest of humanity. Every time we eat any piece of bread, we enact our connection to the farmers who grew the wheat and harvested it, to those who made the wheat into flour and packaged it, to those who transported it, to those who marketed it, to those who took the flour and baked it. When any piece of bread becomes Eucharist — Christ’s very self — then the sacrament impels us to see all of those human connections in light of the gospel. We are connected to the people who provide us with bread, to the people who sew our clothes, to the people who provide the services of life on which we depend. Every time we receive the Eucharist we are impelled to ask: “Are



overemphasized the humanity of the Lord to such a point that we overlook His divinity. Jesus is God — one with the Father and the Spirit at the creation of the universe. The whole Gospel of John was written to combat the denial of the divinity of Christ. Remember how John concludes his Gospel — “this has been written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name [John 20:31]. He is God. And He is ours. We are not alone on our journey of life — He is with us always. But we are human. We are often drained. All of us are stretched to our limits over and over again.

But we are given food for the journey — the Bread of Life, the Eucharist. Our belief in the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist begins with our recognition of his divinity. If He were not God, He could not transform bread and wine into His body and blood. For us, this gift defies the limits of our rational capacity. As we come to a greater awareness that the communion we receive is the Body of Christ, we realize that this divine nourishment is far more than a meal of fellowship — this is the food that provides the spiritual strength for us to make it through the week. This is the food that helps the Mom and Dad continue to be giving to their children when they are tired. This is the food that helps the husband and wife find ways to sacrifice themselves to each other and give the world an example of the sanctity of Christian marriage.

This is the food that helps the Christian grow closer to the Lord despite physical and emotional challenges. God does not demand the impossible from us. He does not give us more than we can handle. He gives us all that we need to complete the journey of our lives to His mountain. The mountain is the goal of our lives. The mountain is the reason why He created each of us. We have to believe in Him. We have to trust in Him. With the food that He gives us — His very body and blood — we can complete the journey; we can be good Moms and Dads, good husbands and wives, good single folk, good Christians, and good priests and religious. With the nourishment He gives us — the Eucharist — we can live well and die well, for the Lord is living in us and working through us.

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

ATTENDANCE:

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a Registration Form [name, address, phone number, children, etc.] indicating this fact, if you have not already done so. Such information not only helps us to know who is attending Our Lady Chapel; it also is of great assistance to us in record keeping [for our friend, the IRS] of any contributions which you may make.

ENVELOPES:

- When you need a **new supply** of envelopes, please feel free to take a supply of them from the table in the vestibule, or call Father John at the Campus Ministry Office [473-3560].
- When you **use** your envelope, please make sure that **your number** is on it. If you need to know your number, please call the Campus Ministry Office. Thanks.

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Baskets are located on the pillars just inside the center door when you enter the chapel. Please place your offering in the basket. Baskets will not be passed during the offertory time. Your offering will help offset chapel daily operating expenses. When you choose to use the envelopes, you can request a printout of your offerings for the year to submit to the IRS. God bless you.

Total Offerings: Saturday [8/3/24] ----- \$ 67.00

Total Offerings: Sunday [8/4/24] ----- \$ 630.00

YOU WANT LOVE?

If we want to experience true love, we have to put our needs and wants second to God’s. —Mark Hart

FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY:

Jezebel had sworn to kill Elijah in retaliation for Elijah's killing the false prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. Elijah fled to the desert — he would try to cross it. He knew that the soldiers wouldn't think he would go there. No one could survive crossing the desert. Elijah had had enough. He was out of food and water. More than that, he just didn't have the fortitude or the stamina to continue to do God's work [1 Kings 19:1-8]. He laid down under that broom tree, and he said to God: "Look, I just can't do this anymore — I'm no better than anyone who has come before me. I just can't continue your mission to Israel." And he fell asleep, hoping to die. But the angel of the Lord woke Elijah and gave him food and water.

Elijah fell asleep again; and again, the angel of the Lord woke Elijah and told him to eat and drink. And, the fed him again — and Elijah walked forty days and forty night to the mountain of God — Horeb. God gave Elijah the power to complete the mission. Elijah first had to journey to the same mountain that Moses journeyed to when he received the Covenant of the Law, the Ten Commandments. In Moses' time, this mountain was called Sinai; in Elijah's time, it was called Horeb. God gave Elijah the food he needed to journey to this mountain.

Like Elijah in the desert, there are times that all of us feel so spiritually drained that we wonder whether or not we have the stamina to complete the particular mission the Lord has for us. For all of us, there is a mountain we have to journey to — a mountain which we have to climb. The mountain is God's unique plan for each of us. There is a mystery in that although the plan is unique, it encompasses a position in life that we share with many people. For example, many people are called to be parents, but each person is called to be a parent in a unique way.

The same can be said for all vocations in life. The plan is a mountain; the journey is our lives. It takes a tremendous amount of strength and determination to be a good husband or good wife, a good parent, and even a good child, a good priest, or a good Teen. It takes a great effort to be a true follower of Christ. It takes a tremendous determination to allow God's plan for us to take place. It is much easier to just give up. All of us know about people who leave their responsibilities because it was just too draining for them. Moms and dads often feel pushed to the limit by their children. It is sad to learn about some parents who just stop putting any energy into raising their children. The same thing can be said about people who give up on the continual sacrificial love of Jesus Christ that the sacrament of matrimony demands.

The same thing can be said about priests and religious who decide that their own needs are more important than the continual demands that the Lord places upon them to care for his people. Like Elijah in the desert, priests can often feel drained; but like Elijah in the desert, the Lord gives them the ability to complete his work.

An angel of the Lord brought Elijah food and water, and he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God. We have a gift far greater than Elijah received. It is not an angel of the Lord that is telling us to take and eat — it is Jesus Christ who gives us the nourishment that we need to complete the work with which we have been entrusted. And we are not given just a hearth cake and water — we are given the very Body and Blood of the Lord to help us complete the journey of the Lord. We all need to remind ourselves of the tremendous gifts we have received from God so we are able to serve Him. We have received the gift of Jesus Christ — the eternal Word become one of us.

It is difficult for us to comprehend the depth of this gift [John 6:41-51]. Like the people in John's Gospel, we often treat the Lord as a great man — nothing more than a man. Perhaps, we have



those people to whom we are connected receiving a just wage? Do they have health care? Can they provide education for their children? Are they free to live life in liberty and in the pursuit of happiness?"

We cannot receive the Eucharist and at the same time distance ourselves from those who make the bread. We cannot receive the Eucharist and separate ourselves from the rest of humanity. Jesus tells us today: "Take and eat." How many times have you received this gift of Eucharist — this tremendous gift of Jesus himself? But whenever we take it, we must also know that we become responsible — responsible to the giver of this immeasurable gift. Whenever we receive this bread from heaven, we become connected to the problems of this earth and to God's determination to resolve them. When we receive what Jesus offers, we become responsible — responsible to build the Kingdom, responsible to act for love and justice in our world. —taken from the writings of Father George Smiga, which appears on the internet.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: Ezekiel 1:2-28, Matthew 17:22-27

Tuesday: Ezekiel 2:8-3:4, Matthew 18:1-14

Wednesday: Ezekiel 9:1-22, Matthew 18:15-20

Thursday: Revelation 11:19-12:10, 1 Corinthians 15:20-27, Luke 1:39-56

Friday: Ezekiel 16:1-63, Matthew 19:3-12

Saturday: Ezekiel 18:1-32, Matthew 19:13-15

20th Week in Ordinary Time: Proverbs 9:1-6, Ephesians 5:15-20, John 6:51-58

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.

**EUCHARISTIC 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.

**THIS NEEDS TO BE OUR PRAYER:**

O my God, fill my soul with holy joy, courage and strength to serve You. Enkindle Your love in me and then walk with me along the next stretch of road before me. — St. Benedicta of the Cross [Edith Stein]

LOOK BEYOND:

In the New Testament we often see two contrasting attitudes among the people — on the one hand they are the grateful recipients of Christ’s miracles; on the other hand, we find them grumbling and criticizing him. There is a good example of this phenomenon in John’s Gospel [Chapter 6]. The people are very grateful for the miraculous distribution of the loaves and the fishes; but then when Jesus tries to explain the significance of this great miracle, they start grumbling and criticizing [John 6:41-51].

This is not so different from the People of Israel in Old Testament times. They were extremely grateful for the miraculous gift of manna which was found lying on the ground every morning and which they could bake into bread [see Exodus 16]. But the appearance of this food which sustained them through their long journey in the desert did not stop them from grumbling against God and even rejecting him on occasion [see Numbers 5:21].

We could probably say that these two attitudes are also alive and well in the world today. We are all grateful for the works of God and the many gifts that he gives us, but this does not stop us from frequently ignoring and even rejecting him. We have an example of this behavior in John’s Gospel — the people had gratefully received the loaves and the fish, but now they grumble and complain when Jesus describes himself as the bread come down from heaven. To them these words smack of terrible heresy.

They know Jesus to be the son of Mary and Joseph, and so they cannot comprehend how he can say that he has come down from heaven. Jesus simply tells them to stop complaining, and continues his discourse; but this confuses them even more.

What Jesus is trying to do is to get them to understand the theology of the Eucharist. He wants them to see how he is really present in the Eucharistic elements. But his words fall on deaf ears because what he is telling them is so different to their ordinary experience that they cannot comprehend it. Of course this is all the more confusing since we — and they — are still in the middle of the story. Jesus has still a year to go before he makes his great sacrifice on the Hill of Calvary. They have no knowledge of the Last Supper; nor do they realize how the first Christians came to understand the significance of this solemn meal and made it the heart of their worship.

So we can excuse their incredulity at the extraordinary words of Jesus. We realize that these words are not so much addressed to them as they are addressed to us — it is we who need to understand precisely who Jesus is and what his relationship with the Eucharist is. It is we who need to grow in our appreciation of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. And so maybe what we should really be doing today is not so much to thinking about the people of the early New Testament, but to think about ourselves and our own understanding of the Eucharist. We need to see if we have a good enough grasp of what the Church actually teaches in reference to it.

Superficially, when we celebrate the Eucharist, not a lot happens. Sure it is a solemn meal, the people are gathered, the scriptures are read and explained, ritualistic words are spoken by the priest, the bread and wine are shared, and then with a blessing everyone goes home. This is what the outsider — the non-believer — observes. But we, the faithful, need to know different — we know that in celebrating this wonderful sacrament we are invisibly connected to the Last Supper. It is as if time has collapsed, and we are gathered together with the Apostles around the table of the Lord, and that it is Jesus who actually utters the words of consecration through his representative, the priest. And it is from Jesus that we receive the Bread of Life and the Blood of our Salvation.

To the untrained heart, the elements that we receive in the Eucharist are practically without any value as real food; it is only through the eyes of faith that we understand the power and value of the true spiritual food that we receive. In partaking of this bread and cup, we are drawn ever nearer to heaven, for we believe the words of the Lord Jesus that he is the Bread of Life, and we know that by consuming the Eucharistic bread and wine we are receiving Jesus himself.

By receiving the Eucharist at Mass, we are also drawn closer to one another; and as a community we

become more and more authentically the Body of Christ. We become the visible sign of the Kingdom of God present in our world. In this way we become an ever more effective witness to Christ for the people who live around us.

What all this tells us is that gathering to celebrate the Mass is one of the most important things we can do. It is good for us in that it draws us ever closer to heaven, and it is good for the world since its people, through our witness, become more aware of Christ and his transforming power. We may not be brilliant Evangelists, we may not be persuasive speakers or powerful debaters, but this does not stop us from being effective witnesses to Christ. The simple act of coming to Mass is, in itself, a real witness to the values of the Kingdom of God — both to yourself and to those who know you. People see these things and take note of them. They know you stand for Christ and for his Gospel of love. They will not say it, but many of them secretly envy you.

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

THE EUCHARIST AND FORGIVENESS:

When Jesus talks about himself as the Bread of Life, what he is saying to you is this: come just as you are — with all your bumps and bruises, with all your disappointments. The Eucharist — the true Bread of Life — is all about Food, Faith, and Forgiveness. It’s hard to enjoy a shared meal when you are at odds with the other person. A common meal often involves letting go of irritations, hurts — even grievances. Forgiveness also interconnects with faith.

A relationship of trust or faith means a willingness to admit failures, ask pardon, and make amends. Even faith in God requires a kind of “forgiveness.” God is all good, all wise, and all loving. Nevertheless, when we pray to God, we should honestly express our disappointments. Take the prophet Elijah as an example. He is at the end of his rope [1 Kings 19:1-8]. He wants to crawl into a hole and die. But he prays — or at least he complains — to the Lord, and then takes a nap. An angel awakens him, tells him to get up, eat something, and start walking — one foot after another, forty days until he comes to Horeb, the holy mountain. What an example for us. Express your anger honestly. God already knows the confusion in your heart. After praying, rest, eat a simple meal, and then get going — one step at a time. Trust God.

Faith and forgiveness go hand in hand. We trust God and we know that he never tires of forgiving. As Pope Francis has often said: “God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy.” If you are going to remember one sentence, remember that one — “God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy.”

The main way you and I experience forgiveness is by participating in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. If you listen closely to the Eucharistic Prayer, you will hear the priest say: “This is the chalice of my blood, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Here we have more than mere words — an action takes place: Jesus by his blood, in Holy Spirit, takes you with all your sins to the Father. What sins are we talking about?

St. Paul puts it bluntly — bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, reviling and malice [Ephesians 4:30-5:2]. Have you experienced any of those sins in the last year or two? Maybe the last hour or two? Take your sins to the cross. When you come to the Mass you time travel to Jerusalem — about 30 AD. You kneel at the foot of the cross together with Mary, John, and all the saints and angels. St. Paul speaks about the sacrificial offering of Jesus. In the Mass we join ourselves to that offering.

Think of Edith Stein — also known as St. Benedicta of the Cross. Eighty-two years ago — August 9, 1942 — she and her sister gave their lives at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Many of those who travel to World Youth Day in 2016 will visit that site where they joined their lives and deaths to the one sacrificial offering — Jesus the true Bread of Life. That’s the invitation of the Eucharist. Experience the peace that comes from joining yourself — just as you are with all your disappointments — to the self-offering of Jesus, the True Bread of Life.

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