

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

**~ A Prayer for Wholeness ~**

You created your world  
as a circle of love,  
Designer God,  
a wonderful round globe of beauty.  
And you create me still today  
in circles of love —  
family  
friendship  
community.

Yet your circle of love  
is repeatedly broken  
because of my love of exclusion.  
I make separate circles —  
inner circle  
outer circle  
a circle of power  
a circle of despair  
a Circle of privilege  
a circle of deprivation.

I need your healing touch  
to smooth my sharp edges.  
Remind me  
that only a fully round,  
hand-joined circle  
can move freely  
like a spinning wheel  
or the globe I call home.  
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.*

**LABOR DAY:**

Next **Monday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>**, we take time to celebrate the final holiday of the summer — **Labor Day**. Besides reflecting on summer, the holiday, by its very title, invites us to reflect upon the contributions that each person makes toward the building of the human family. All of us are called by God to continue to participate in the work of creation. Each of us, because of our baptism, is called to bring to life, through our talents and energies, to that small piece of God’s kingdom on earth. **Mass will be celebrated at 9:30 AM on Monday.** We would be honored if you and your family will join us.



**FAITH EDUCATION :**

**Our Faith Education Program will begin on Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup>.** All children who will be part of our Faith Education program need to register. 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.



**WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE AN ALTAR SERVER or LECTOR?**

We are resuming our need for Servers, in light of the upcoming school year and school Masses. We are also always in need of Lectors for our weekend Masses, as well as for upcoming school Masses. **Any student who is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> [and up] grade is invited to become an Altar Server; any student who is in the 5<sup>th</sup> [and up] grade is invited to become a Lector.** Adults are also welcome to join in this ministry.



These are both wonderful ministries — a great way to serve God and the faith community. If you would like to take advantage of these opportunities, **please give your name to Father John.** You do not have to attend Gilmour to be an Altar Server, Lector, or to be involved in any other Ministry at Our Lady Chapel. **Please call the Chapel office [440-473-3560].**

**LIVING FOR GOD:**

What is the purpose of life? It is that we should revere the all-powerful God. To revere God means to respect and stand in awe of him because of who he is. Purpose in life starts with whom we know — not what we know or how good we are. It is impossible to fulfill your God-given purpose unless you revere God and give him first place in your life.



**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.**



**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

- For the victims of the tornadoes and storms in our area.
- 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.

**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.



**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.

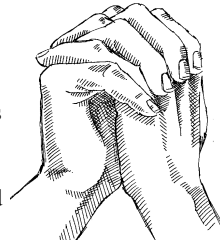
**Total Offerings: Saturday [ 8/17/24] ----- \$ 178.00**  
**Total Offerings: Sunday [ 8/18/24] ----- \$ 420.00**

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

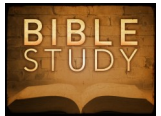
**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- 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 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 the care of hospice.
- For Frank McCamley, former Gilmour teacher, father of Brian ['03] and Lauren ['08] McCamley, who is seriously ill.
- For Karen O'Keefe, wife of former Gilmour transportation associate, Richard O'Keefe, who is seriously ill.
- For Brother Edward Libbers, C.S.C., who is in rehab following a fall.
- For Cheri Ramos, future mother-in-law of LS Montessori instructor, Jacqueline Schmidt, who is seriously ill following a ruptured aneurysm
- For Father Ray Sutter, pastor emeritus of St. Matthias Parish, who is recovering from hip replacement surgery.
- For Sheldon Gray, who is suffering from a-fib, a recent fall, and has a brain bleed.



**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4<sup>th</sup>:**

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, September 4<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: Being Born Again in Christ**

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 25: 21 <sup>st</sup> Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, August 26:	NO MASS
Tuesday, August 27: St. Monica	NO MASS
Wednesday, August 28: St. Augustine	NO MASS
Thursday, August 29: The passion of John the Baptist	NO MASS
Friday, August 30:	NO MASS
Saturday, August 31: 22 <sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, September 1: 22 <sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream

**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — SEPTEMBER 21<sup>st</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.

**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:**

Do we follow Christ out of obligation or out of self-interest? It's surprising to note that we follow Christ for both reasons. Christ is our Master and Lord, and so the things that he teaches us are things that we as disciples are obliged to obey. Yet, we would be seriously misled to imagine that the teachings of Christ are some arbitrary set of rules set out to measure our fidelity. Christ's teachings are not some hurdle that we are meant to jump over or some obstacle that we are meant to get around. In fact, the very things that Christ asks us to do are the means to goodness and joy. Christ does not direct us to do one thing or another just to make our lives difficult, but rather so that we might become whole and healthy people. The teachings of Jesus are given to us for our own good.

When I was in the fifth grade my teacher was Sr. Philomena, and she had a very strong interest in promoting the scapular. I don't know if all of you know what a scapular is. It is a religious article that you wear like a medal, but it's made out of cloth in order to mirror the habit of a religious brother or sister. There are different kinds of scapulars, but Sr. Philomena was particularly attached to the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. She told us that Mary had promised St. Simon Stock that those who wore the scapular would never die without first having access to a priest who could hear their confession and forgive them of their sins.

So, with this information, my good friend Henry Bockal and I came up with a plan. Very contrary to the intentions of Sr. Philomena, Henry and I decided, we would wear the scapular and live lives of crime! We figured that we could lie and cheat, we could be unkind and tease all the girls in our class, we could steal what we needed from the store, disobey our parents, and indulge our every desire. Yet because we wore the scapular we would know that before we died we could confess all our sins and go straight to heaven. It seemed like a very good plan at the time. But from my viewpoint today it was flawed on several levels. First of all, it treated the scapular like some kind of magical token. Second, it certainly abused the whole notion of the sacrament of penance. But perhaps its most fundamental flaw was the presumption that living lives against the teachings of Jesus would somehow make us happy. We imagined that if we were criminals and selfish — indulging our every desire — we would have a fuller and better life. We thought that we were clever by finding a way to avoid those things that seemed so difficult, but we were totally ignorant of the fact that the very teachings which we sought to avoid were given to us precisely to lead us to happiness and joy.

This is the big insight of Peter in John's gospel. When the other disciples left Jesus because they thought his teaching was too difficult and Jesus asked whether they should want to go also, Peter responded: "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" [John 6:60-69]. What Peter was really saying was that there is no choice. You could find a way of living that asks less of you, but you could not find a way of living that offers more to you. The very things that Christ asks us to do are for our own benefit. Avoiding them does not in the long term make sense. It is not in our own self-interest.

This is something I think we should keep in mind as we live this week, as we make decisions in the future. Is it at times difficult to love others, to place their interest and good before our own, to be flexible and willing to compromise, to be generous with our time and resources? Of course, it is difficult. But being unkind, being selfish, being ungenerous, is not going to bring us joy. The deepest joy in life is in knowing that we can love and are being loved in return — that we are kind and generous persons. That is what will make us happy and that is why Christ commands it.

Is it difficult to forgive, to put hurts behind us and move on with life? Of course, it is. But refusing to forgive is not going to bring us freedom. It will only assure us slavery to our anger, to our hurt and

**THE CALL TO MARRIAGE EQUALITY:**

Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus talks about the relationship of husband and wife — "Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the Church" [Ephesians 5:21-33]. Some evangelical Christians and traditionalist Catholics defend this teaching and try to live it out in their marriages. Most American Christians, however, find the whole notion of husband headship and wife submission to be repugnant and either reject it outright, or look for ways to explain it away. The teaching from Ephesians is especially troubling as the "Me Too" movement brings to public attention numerous cases of powerful men taking advantage of women.



Let us examine what Paul writes from an historical context. The author — probably a disciple of Paul writing in the late first century — lived in a patriarchal society with a generally accepted sexist bias. Although he wrote from a Christian perspective that challenged some of the abuses of his day, he simply assumed that husbands were the proper heads of households and that their wives should respect this.

Just as the biblical authors were influenced by their patriarchal culture, so we who read the scriptures today are influenced by contemporary developments and trends. Culturally, there is general agreement that women are worthy of respect and deserve equal rights — even if that ideal is not yet achieved. Theologically, Catholic scholars remind us that Christ's teaching on love presses toward seeing marriage as a partnership based on equality of the sexes and mutual respect of the spouses. Just as the ongoing reflection on the law of love eventually illumined the evils of the accepted practice of slavery, so does this same reflection illumine the lingering evils of patriarchy and highlight the ideal of marital partnership. The majority of Christians who have intuitively rejected female subordination in favor of marriage equality are on solid theological ground. The practice and teaching of Christ prompts couples to base their marriage on self-sacrificing love, mutual respect, and fundamental equality.

Let us consider this composite story of Jacob and Rachel — a couple who chose this section of Paul's for a reading at their wedding Mass 45 years ago. Influenced by their families of origin, they both implicitly accepted that Jacob was head of the household. In their early years of marriage, they moved several times, each time choosing his career opportunities over hers. When they had children, she assumed most of the childrearing responsibilities in addition to most of the domestic chores she was already doing on a daily basis. Rachel dutifully met her wifely responsibilities, attending to the needs of her husband and children.

Around their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Rachel became dissatisfied with her predominantly patriarchal marriage. Jacob was quick to grasp the gravity of the problem, and together they sought advice from their pastor, who shared with them the Vatican II teaching on marriage as an equal partnership. With this in mind, Jacob and Rachel gradually developed new ways of relating to one another. He became more attentive to her needs, tried to do a bigger share of domestic chores, turned down a lucrative career move to have more family time, and supported her return to the job market. For her part, Rachel grew in self-confidence, was more assertive in her relationships, and found deeper satisfaction in her marriage. When they prayed together, they both expressed great gratitude for the new partnership they enjoyed.

What can you do to challenge patriarchy and sexism?

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

**EUCCHARIST:**

Eucharist is presence encountering presence — mutuality and vulnerability. There is nothing to prove, nothing to protect, and nothing to sell. It feels so empty, naked, and harmless, that all you can do is be present.

The Eucharist is telling us that God is the food and all we have to do is provide the hunger. Somehow we have to make sure that each day we are hungry, that there's room inside of us for another presence. If you are filled with your own opinions, ideas, righteousness, superiority, or sufficiency, you are a world unto yourself and there is no room for "another." Despite all our attempts to define who is worthy and who is not worthy to receive communion, our only ticket or prerequisite for coming to Eucharist is hunger. And most often sinners are much more hungry than the "saints"

—unknown

we get there even in the dark. When you travel, you can phone or text those whom you left behind to tell them you are safe, and to check if there is anything “new”.

Faith of any kind and trust in anybody has been injured by our increased reliance on technology. We desire to the point that we almost demand to see the replay before the play. Signs lead only to wanting clarity and conviction. In many ways, we have to admit that faith in the “beyond” or “transcendent” or “God” was more a part of a past time when night was dark, trails and roads led “out there”, and signs were both indicators and invitations to continue.

God continues to offer us invitations. These “signs” are invitations to trust, but they can also be taken as nothing more than non-“sense” and not be followed. There are signs that can indicate there is no God, that religion is absurd, and the Church an “opiate of the people”. Belief is a non-sense experience, in a sense. Faith is a human way of responding to what we sense, but our senses can take us only to the threshold where the signs say: “Go beyond!”

Living with and through faith is not an easy way to go. We rely on the Spirit of God to draw us beyond what we can see, taste, touch and reason. For us, it is the way we desire to go against our technological security-centered human inclinations.

### READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

**Monday:** 2 Thessalonians 1:1-5, 11-12, Matthew 23:13-22

**Tuesday:** Sirach 26:1-4, 13-16; Luke 7:11-17

**Wednesday:** 1 John 4:7-16, Matthew 23:8-12

**Thursday:** Jeremiah 1:17-19, Mark 6:17-29

**Friday:** 1 Corinthians 1:17-25, Matthew 25:1-13

**Saturday:** 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Matthew 25:14-30

**22<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time:** Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8; James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

### 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.



### MERCY:

Mercy is a compassionate understanding of another’s unhappiness.

—Bishop Fulton Sheen

resentment. Forgiving another is in our own self-interest and that is why Christ commands it. Is it difficult to be a person of integrity, to be true to our word, fair to others, responsible to those who belong to us? Of course, it is. But one of the greatest satisfactions in life is to know that we have the respect of others and that we are a person of character. That is what brings us happiness and joy and that is why Christ commands us to be such a person.

What Christ commands us to do, he commands us to do for our own good. Ignoring the teachings of Jesus is not some clever way of avoiding an obligation. It is working against our own self-interest. There really is no other way. If we want happiness, if we want fullness of life and joy, there is no other path to choose. For we believe that Christ has the words of eternal life.

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

### LIVING THE CALL:

Paul gives his Ephesian Church some words of advice: “Watch carefully how you live — not as foolish persons but as wise people — making the most of the opportunity because the days are evil” [Ephesians 5:15-20]. In order to take full advantage of opportunities, we must “try to understand what is the will of the Lord.” In discerning the divine will, we should stay sober and with a clear head draw on the wisdom and energy of the Holy Spirit. Common public prayer with hymns and spiritual songs, along with private prayer in our hearts, puts us in touch with the Holy Spirit, who guides our efforts to seize the moment and make the most of our opportunities. For these moments of grace and for all blessings, we should give “thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.”

Our daily lives are filled with opportunities to do God’s will by growing spiritually, attending to our neighbors in need, and serving the common good. There are various reasons for failing to take advantage of these opportunities — too busy, too distracted, too self-centered, and too superficial. We may lack some specific knowledge that would alert us to the rich potential of daily opportunities — for instance, we may not realize that ordinary experience has a depth dimension or that life provides a path to holiness. Good Christians may have such an underdeveloped appreciation of the role of the Holy Spirit that they cannot imagine the Spirit at work in their daily activities. It is possible for us to take the simple blessings of life so much for granted that we fail to see them as catalysts for prayers and spiritual growth.

Let us imagine individuals who surmount these obstacles and move forward on making the most of the opportunities encountered on the journey of life. Tim, a busy, hard driving lawyer with multiple demands on his time, could rethink his priorities and find more opportunities to be present for his family. Tina, who often feels underappreciated for her demanding job of raising three kids, could find deeper meaning in her motherly responsibilities by seeing them as her path to holiness. Mark, a faithful Catholic with a strong devotion to Christ present in the Eucharist, could enrich his spiritual life by listening to the Holy Spirit calling him to do more to help persons in need. Mary, who has generally taken for granted her excellent education, successful career and happy marriage, could come to see them as undeserved blessings, a graced insight leading to prayers of gratitude and greater appreciation of the simple gifts of everyday life.

What next step that you could take to do a better job of making the most of the specific opportunities for growth and service that come your way?

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

Sing and  
make music  
in your  
hearts ♪  
to the Lord.  
Ephesians 5:19

**SCANDALOUSLY ORDINARY:**

We probably share a lot with the sincere, vacillating Israelites Joshua called together [Joshua 24:1-18]. Joshua called for a take-it-or-leave-it commitment — “Choose either the God who brought you through the desert or the attractive gods that surround you.”

The people swore: “Far be it from us to forsake the Lord!” But doggone it, they hadn’t really grasped the radicality of the choice. Joshua demanded that they pledge absolute commitment to God of the Exodus — the God about whom they had complained in the desert, the God who required them to leave the known behind to follow a hope for which they had no proof, the God whose commands they ignored again and again over the course of 40 years. Their other option was to serve gods they could make in their own image — gods of manipulation and materialism, gods of power and might.

The people swore their choice. From then on, they would try and often fail at fulfilling their promise. In the process, they would gain saving knowledge; they would learn that their forgiving God only wanted them to try to give it their all. Their desire to love, their frequent repentance and conversion, would define them in God’s eyes more than all their failures.

The God Joshua spoke for was also the God of Jesus. People had difficulty with Jesus because he did not fit their concept of God and holiness. He was too simple, too weak — too much like them. Although they probably could not have articulated it exactly this way, Jesus appeared too unimposing to claim to be the one sent by God as the new “bread come down from heaven.” Jesus was scandalously ordinary, except in how he loved God and made God’s love available to others.

It seems that Jesus understood why people rejected him better than they did themselves. Knowing where it would all lead, he questioned them: “If the claim that I came from God shocks you, what will happen when you see me ascend to where I was before?”

In John’s Gospel, Jesus’ being raised up implied the cross, the most disappointing, confusing, tragic, idol-smashing image of God any world religion has ever presented. But that was what Jesus offered. He said: “I am the bread of life. Those who accept and believe in me — in my sacrifice, in my weakness and in my suffering — can receive the life I offer.”

Indeed, this saying is hard. Neither Jesus’ words nor his deeds portray a mighty God who manipulates history or attempts to force belief via miracles or threat of punishment. The God of Jesus — the God present in Jesus — nourishes and gives life like bread does. One must receive it. God’s love and spirit are available to those who ask, God never imposes. Jesus represented and brought others into contact with the God who invited them into an exchange of love that leads to total self-giving on both sides.

In the long run, this God can seem more frightening than the gods of power and might. This God cannot be tamed with sacrifices or long, loud prayers. This God wants nothing less than everything we are and offers nothing less than God’s own self.

This is far more than we can take in. Thus, this God offers to come to us through simple signs like bread. With each Communion, we renew the radical choice to accept and reciprocate God’s offer of love. The more we understand it, the more we know we will not live up to it. But rather than retreat, we say with Peter: “To whom shall you go? You have the words of eternal life.”

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

**FINDING OURSELVES:**

Use me, God, show me how to take who I am, who I want to be, and what I can do, and use it for a purpose greater than myself.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

**LIVING WITH AND THROUGH FAITH:**

The closest we get to true freedom is trusting God. And that is the closest we get to doing or living God’s “will”. Having trust in something — or especially somebody — is a quite selfless act. Trusting can be the last resort after trying other options which may have failed. To have faith in another is a wonderful present of love. Faith and love are so similar that they are the same leap.

In the First Commandment we are invited to “love God”. This is the prime relational request, but loving God usually does not have the same emotional surroundings as loving spouses, family, and friends. Loving God is trusting within this context of doubts; it is a great act of freedom. It is not experienced easily. We are so insecure, frightened, and self-absorbed. God is so loving that God’s will is not something we might “find or not”. If that were true, we’d never know if we were or were not doing it. God invites us to trust our senses and mental capacities, and then do something in actions of trust and love.

Joshua [24:1-18] is preparing to have a great farewell celebration. He begins by telling the people of Israel to follow the laws and customs of their covenantal relationship with the Lord. God has been fighting against the enemies of the Israelites — now the land is their own. Joshua relates specifically the history of the Lord’s care for Israel. There have been many great people and events that have brought them to this moment. All of this demands a response on the part of the people.

Based on all that the Lord has done for Israel, which way will they choose? The Israelites have been invited to look backwards through their national history to see God’s goodness to them. Now Joshua is asking them about their looking forward. Joshua — as Moses’ replacement — declares that he and his folks choose the Lord. The people reply that they too know their history, and they are sticking with the winner who has made them victorious themselves.

In John’s Gospel [6:60-69], we reach the great conclusion of the discussion about Jesus being the “Bread of Life”, and his being the one “sent”. Some of His disciples find these words offensive to their senses — it boggles their minds. They cannot stay; they leave and return to their former ways of seeing, thinking, and believing. They did see the miraculous distribution of bread and fish and ate their fill. Their senses told them something they could grasp. Jesus stretches their minds and asks them to be open to something even more miraculous, but it goes beyond the information provided by the senses. They choose the path of the “flesh”, while Jesus is inviting them to walk the walk of the Spirit. They stumble over what they cannot see or imagine.

Many leave, but some stay — including Peter. So, Jesus puts the big question to them and him: “Do you also want to leave?” As with Joshua, Peter professes that they have seen enough to trust what they cannot see with the eyes of their “flesh”.

Peter’s assent to Jesus concludes a section in John’s Gospel which is called the “Book of Signs”. In this section are various “sense-based” encounters — water becoming wine, the blind and lame being healed as well as bread being multiplied. There is evidence — but just enough — to allow the act of believing to be made freely; but everyone is free to not believe also. Why do some believe and others just leave? Jesus tells us that the “spirit” draws some and the “flesh” attracts others.

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