

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

~ A Prayer for the third week in Advent ~

I praise you, Lord,  
and ask,  
who am I,  
A small one of the earth,  
that the word of the Lord  
should come to me?  
Open my ears  
that it may be a word  
that compels me  
to do what is right and just.  
Open my heart  
that it maybe a word of rejoicing.

O Majesty,  
O Splendor  
greater than the mountains and the sky!  
I am a child of earth  
who adores you.  
I love you,  
And I live  
because you have desired me.  
Praised be God  
whose greatness has reached  
to the ends of the earth.  
Let me live in your presence  
and give thanks through your name!  
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.*

**ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE:**

On **Monday, December 16<sup>th</sup>**, at **7:00 PM**, we will celebrate our Advent communal **Penance Service**. This service will consist of scriptural reflections by those involved in the Christmas story. There will also be songs and hymns, and a time to straighten the paths of our lives to ease the arrival of our God. Each of us needs to truly hear in our heart the message of John the Baptist: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” The service will last about 45 minutes. There will be an opportunity for individual reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation following the service. Please join us.

**SCHEDULE OF ADVENT/CHRISTMAS SERVICES:**

- **Monday, December 16—Advent Communal Penance Service at 7:00 PM**
- **December 21-22—regular weekend schedule**
- **Tuesday, December 24 —Christmas Eve Mass at 4:00 PM**
- **Wednesday, December 25 — Christmas Day Mass at 10:00 AM**
- **December 28-29 — regular weekend schedule**
- **Tuesday, December 31 — New Year’s Eve Mass at 5:00 PM**
- **January 4-5 — Regular weekend schedule.**

**THE GIVING TREE:**

**Giving Tree gifts are due this Monday, December 16<sup>th</sup>.** Please bring your gifts back, with the tags attached, and leave them under the tree. Our Lady of Fatima Family Center will be picking up our gifts on Tuesday. **Remember, your gift can be UNWRAPPED. Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560 or szaniszlop@gilmour.org] if you have any questions. Thank you for your generosity!**

**“ADOPT A FAMILY”:**

**Adopt a Family gifts are due by Sunday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>.** For many years, Our Lady Chapel community has worked with St. Adalbert Parish in adopting families to help them celebrate the Christmas Season. St. Adalbert identifies families — most often single parent, below poverty-level families, in their school & parish. We are given the grade levels of the children & other family information. Since the pandemic, we have been limited to gift cards, **but this year we are opening it up to gift cards or actual gifts.**

**So St. Adalbert has sent us their list of families whom they would like to serve this year. The need is greater than ever.** In addition to gifts for family members, we also ask that you provide a Christmas meal for the family in the form of Gift Cards for Wal-Mart, Dave’s or Aldi [or purchase non-perishable items and place them in a basket].

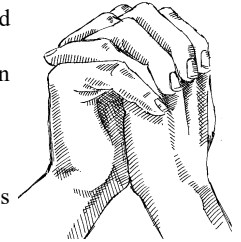
Those from our Chapel family who participated in this project last year spoke very highly of the benefit of this project to their own families. This is a project that the entire family can get involved in. Families can be matched according to family size, ages, etc. It was truly inspiring. Adopt-a-family gifts should be **WRAPPED**. **Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560 or szaniszlop@gilmour.org] if you and your family would like to participate in this program, or if you have any questions. The deadline for turning in gifts is Sunday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>.**

**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.
- For Josephine Fernando, who is seriously ill.
- For Father Ray Sutter, pastor emeritus of St. Matthias Parish, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Cathy Lough, friend of Cyndi Frimel, who is undergoing health struggles.
- For Dave & Elaine Tanaski, who are suffering with dementia and other health complications.
- For Nick Chiacchiarri, father of Mark Mark Chiacchiarri [‘94], father-in-law of Michelle Chiacchiarri [‘96], and grandfather of Aurelia [‘28], and Olivia [‘30] Chiacchiarri, who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Kip Apel, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Sabrina Kumar, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Margaret Thompson, friend of Joyce Toth, who is under the care of hospice.
- For Father Tom Lemos, C.S.C., who is recovering from intestinal surgery.
- For Father Leo Polselli, C.S.C., who is hospitalized with blood clots in his lungs.

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Thomas Verdi, father of Gilmour Parent, Katie Impullitti, father-in-law of Nick Impullitti [‘01], grandfather of Joey [‘34], Jackson [‘36], and Quinn [‘39] Impullitti.
- For Peter Ducic
- For Patricia Smolik, grandmother of Faith Smolik [‘22]
- For Arleen Turk, aunt of Upper School Science Teacher, Edward Turk, great aunt of Trinity [‘22], Edward [‘24] and Henry [‘29] Turk.
- For Mary Chambers
- For Mary Grace Welch, grandmother of Holy Cross novice, James Welch
- For Joyce Balazs.
- For Nancy Schlotter, grandmother of Katelyn Schlotter [‘18]
- For Chester Orlando, great uncle of Ashley [‘26] and John [‘28] Orlando.
- For Rose Marie Ripepi, grandmother of Gianna [‘18] and Vincent [‘22] Stafford
- For Amanda Impullitti, sister of Nick Impullitti [‘01], aunt of Joey [‘34], Jackson [‘36], and Quinn [‘39] Impullitti.
- For Eleanor DeMarco, mother of Chapel office associate Patty Szaniszlo, and Kathy DeMarco (anniversary)

- How often do you laugh each day? I am not speaking just about a little chuckle, but a full, heartfelt laugh.
- When was the last time you spent a few moments quietly waiting with someone who was hurting?
- Have you ever looked into the eyes of someone who is impoverished and embraced them?
- What are you expecting to find at the manger?
- What do you think you will experience, personally and internally, when Christ comes again?
- Has waiting become any easier for you as you get older?

We cannot remain on the surface of life. It will destroy us. We have to learn how to drink deeply of life's wellsprings and stir up and listen to the desires God places in our hearts. They are desires for God's presence and an experience of intense and lasting joy. If we really desired and possessed joyful hearts, nothing can ever rob us of that eternal flame burning within.

—taken from the writings of Father Mark Suslenko which appears on the internet.

**LancerSGO — Back in 2024!**

Gilmour Academy is once again participating in the State of Ohio *Scholarship Granting Organization* program. Ohio taxpayers who donate to the *LancerSGO* program may be eligible for a 100% tax credit on their State of Ohio income tax return for the year the contribution is made. *LancerSGO* donations are awarded as tuition assistance to Gilmour students.



Here's how it works: The maximum credit amount is \$750 per individual; married couples that file a joint return can each claim this credit if both spouses make eligible donations [\$1,500 total]. Please note this is a non-refundable credit, which means that the amount of the credit cannot exceed the amount owed in state taxes. Just follow these three steps:

- STEP 1- Estimate your 2024 Ohio state tax liability.
- STEP 2- Make your donation to [gilmour.org/sgo](http://gilmour.org/sgo) [designate GILMOUR ACADEMY].
- STEP 3- Claim your scholarship tax credit when you file your 2024 State of Ohio taxes.

Please visit [gilmour.org/sgo](http://gilmour.org/sgo) to make an online contribution.

[PLEASE NOTE: This does not constitute income tax advice. Always consult with a tax professional for information on the impact of any charitable donation].

For more information, contact Ryan Ryzner at [ryznerr@gilmour.org](mailto:ryznerr@gilmour.org) or (440) 473-8000 x4556.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas.
- For an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.
- For a greater awareness of our call to create a more humane and just society.

**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19<sup>th</sup>:**

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM. Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God's word. It's a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can't come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God's word.



**Our topic: The Jesse Tree**

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, December 15: 3 <sup>rd</sup> Week in Advent	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, December 16:	NO MASS
Tuesday, December 17:	8:00 AM, 11:15 AM, 2:00 PM
Wednesday, December 18:	8:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 2:00 PM
Thursday, December 19:	8:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 11:20 AM, 2:00 PM
Friday, December 20:	8:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 11:20 AM, 2:00 PM
Saturday, December 21: 4 <sup>th</sup> Week in Advent	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, December 22: 4 <sup>th</sup> Week in Advent	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream

**CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS:**

Again this year we will accept memorial donations to help defray the cost of flowers and decorations which we use in our chapel for the Christmas season. If you are interested in making a donation **in memory of loved ones**, please put the names of the loved ones along with your donation in an envelope, mark it "Christmas Flowers," and either give it to Father John or drop it in the offering basket. **Please keep the following people in your prayers: In memory of Pat Redmond, and the Blazek, Rezabek families.** We will publish the names of your loved ones in the Bulletin as a memorial throughout the Christmas season.



**REMEMBER:**

Those who carry God in their heart bears heaven with him wherever they go —St. Ignatius of Loyola

**REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME:**

What a delight to reflect on the Scripture Readings for this 3<sup>rd</sup> Week in Advent — they remind me of what it felt like to be a child again at Christmas time. Our Scripture readings are filled with hope, joy, and the anticipation that something great is about to happen.

I remember a time when I was about 10 years old, and it was in the morning before the sun came up. I was out on my paper route delivering newspapers and was by myself. I was almost finished with my route when the snow started falling. I remember stopping at a street corner not far from my house and just watched the snow fall. I was so quiet and I felt an overwhelming sense of peace. I wanted to stay on that street corner forever because everything in the world seemed right just as it was.

I think that moment was my first memory and experience with Reality — the way Life is without all the clutter. The way God lives in and through me and with all that is. I think I wanted to stay on that street corner because I was overwhelmed by experiencing God all around me — Christ was everywhere! As St. Paul says in his letter to the Church at Philippi: “Rejoice! The Lord is near; have no anxiety at all, for the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” [Philippians 4:4-7]. It is proof to me that God is always present and there is always reason to “Rejoice!”

That brings us to the writings of the Prophet Zephaniah which are full of prophecies against the nation, the leaders, and the people of Israel. Disasters will befall God’s people because of their false worship and disregard for the needs of the poor. God is going to sweep away all living things from the face of the earth. The leaders, the judges, the prophets, and the priests have all defiled the nation and the city of Jerusalem.

But all this sad-bad news is replaced by the glad-news that this very same God of troubling vengeance has remained faithful and actually is living in the presence of Israel; fear and disenchantment have been driven away and the victorious warrior is now singing and dancing with joy over the return of Israel [Zephaniah 3:14-18].

The images in this poem are celebrational and reflective of the ritual festivals of this agricultural land. Instead of a sweeping away, there is a gathering up; rather than banishment, there is inclusion. The people are to shout for joy that what was held against them has been removed, and they are to relate gratefully with their new and loving King.

This 3<sup>rd</sup> Week in Advent used to be called “Rejoice Sunday” [Gaudate Sunday], and the themes running through the Scripture Readings are certainly joyful. We are now a little less than two weeks away from the celebration of the feast of the Nativity. The sense of joyful anticipation is emphasized. Jesus, as Victorious Warrior, is drawing near. Paul’s letter to the Church at Philippi echoes strongly this spirit. Someone very good to us and for us is near and we will be better for that Someone’s arrival.

John the Baptist continues to take “center stage” as he announces the imminent arrival of the Messiah [Luke 3:10-18]. In response to this preaching, various groups of people line up to find out what they must do to be ready. We all want to know what’s expected of us — what’s going to be on the test; how will I be prepared for the upcoming job interview; what’s involved in taking care of aging parents. The crowds, the tax collectors, the soldiers and presumably other groups of influential people, stepped up to make sure they would be wearing the proper clothes and appearing just right and ready.

John tells each in turn to let go of the natural inclinations of their trade or lifestyle. Basically, John is telling them to be freed from their fullness of self to receive a life that leads to the fullness of life. John the Baptist uses a familiar farm image to describe one of the missions of the One who is to come. The Waited-For will have a large fan in His hand and will separate the precious grains of wheat from the expendable chaff. The grain is that those who will receive life through the Messiah will in turn give that

**THE GIFT OF ADVENT**

The last couple of weeks have presented us with an opportunity to stop, listen, reflect, and focus. As we enter into this 3<sup>rd</sup> Week in Advent, we are called to rejoice! — “Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel” [Isaiah 12:6]. We need more Advent time in our lives. In his exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis remarks: “Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God’s voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades.”

In order to recognize the incarnate Holy One of God in the simplicity of a manger bed, we have to journey for a while through the dark, holy, quiet, and ordinary night. We press on — seeking and hoping to find something profound, completely different, life-changing, and light-giving. We want joy! We all want to feel that certain something that presents itself as a light, however sometimes dim it flickers in the midst of life’s most heart-wrenching moments. A light that spurs us onward can still cause us to smile and have hope in the middle of despair, reminding us that we are loved.

It’s too easy today to remove ourselves from people. We get involved with our agendas, our gadgets, our world of faceless names and contacts, demands, obligations, work, and basic stuff. It is no wonder we are robbed of joy and even deadened to our thirsting need for it. Even after Mary was asked to do the most incredible of things, she said: “My spirit rejoices in God my savior!” [Luke 1:47]. We begin to experience joy when we empty ourselves into the life of another, when we sit with them when they are lonely, walk with them in their pain, hold them in their grief, and show them that, at least at this moment, they are more important than anything or anyone else in our lives. Profound encounters such as these are only possible when we are comfortable in our own skin and comfortable in “God’s skin!” Pope Francis goes on to say that “the most beautiful and natural expressions of joy which I have seen in my life were in poor people who had little to hold on to.”

Several years ago, I made frequent trips to Argentina. While an absolutely beautiful country with beautiful people, its landscape gives witness to the prevalent presence of abject poverty. Outside my hotel lived a family of four in a box. The box, which was clearly their home, was carefully positioned on a very busy Buenos Aires street. Jose was a precocious three-year-old who was filled with joy. Every time I came back to the hotel, we would sit and play in the street, and I would bring the family some food. His family had absolutely nothing except a few simple possessions. Even though life was incredibly difficult for them, they all had a light within that continued to flicker through their darkness. Spending time with them was a life-changing experience for me.

In an attempt to hold onto and protect our “stuff,” we can often become so self-absorbed that we lose sight of what is really important and what our hearts really need. We lose touch with our desire for God and our need to profoundly connect with one another. These encounters need to be in-person encounters — and not things we find on a Facebook chat or with “friends” we have never actually met. We need simple, sacred moments where we put all of our other things aside to sit, play, hope, watch, love, admire, and wait with God, others, and even ourselves. We need to make room for these sacred Advent moments.

We rejoice today because we know that we are profoundly and unconditionally loved by God. This is not knowledge just of the mind, but of the heart. When we discover it, embrace it, and live by it, we find ourselves surprised by joy — even when we are consumed with sorrow.

- Here are a few questions to ponder as our Advent time winds down:



**ADVENT IS A “HANDS ON” EXPERIENCE:**

An elderly person in Kansas City went each day to the newspaper box on the corner. She placed her money in the slot, opened the door, and took as many newspapers as were there. Finally she was caught. The charge was that she was selling the papers. She was acquitted — she was actually taking the papers back to her home to use as fuel. She wanted to remember what warmth felt like for a few moments each day. One third of our fellow citizens in the United States are either badly fed or living in sub-standard housing or wearing rags. Sometimes they suffer from all three afflictions. The situation deteriorates daily. Our privately funded Soup Kitchens are sometimes literally running out of soup. Incidentally, contrary to popular prejudice, the majority of our poor are white; most of them are children. We Americans have the capability to watch a comet strike Jupiter, but we have failed to give an old woman in Kansas City fuel for her house.

Why should this tale of woe excite us this third Week in Advent? After all, we can already see beautifully wrapped gifts and bright Christmas trees. The answer is to be found in Luke’s Gospel [3:10-18]. It grabs us rudely by the throat and reminds us that ours is a social Gospel. It is not merely a question of God and me, but rather God, me, and the other person. This is so especially when the other person is going down for the third time. Many Catholics charge that the Church is oftentimes off the mark. This charge becomes particularly true when “economic issues” are discussed.

Yet, John the Baptist reminds us that we need to be a “hands on” Church. What can be more explicit about moral questions than the three answers given by John to questions put to him? One section of his audience asked him: “What must we do then?” In answer he said: “If anyone has two overcoats, he must share with the man who has none, and the one with an extra loaf of bread must do the same.” John is not telling his audience to give away everything they have; rather, he is advising them to give out of their surplus.

Then it is the tax collectors’ turn — “Master, what must we do?” His answer was swift: “Do not rob taxpayers blind.” Finally the military — “What about us?” John continues on a roll: “Hold no kangaroo court-martials. Do not shake anyone down.” This advice from the Jewish holy man can hardly be called the general principles of morality. Rather, the Baptist is crossing the “t’s” and dotting the “i’s.” A spiritual director at a seminary was admirably nicknamed John the Baptist by the students. He not only lived like the Baptizer, but he also spoke like him to them. Would anyone be tempted to give us such a nickname? Probably not.

St. Paul endorses the advice of John the Baptist. Paul is writing to the small Christian colony at Philippi in Greece. It had been founded by Philip — the father of Alexander the Great — and so its name. Paul writes: “Let your generosity be manifest to all.” As a matter of fact, this advice to be generous with a five dollar bill is a broken record in the letters of Paul. One finds the advice not only here, but also in his letters to the Romans, Galatians, Hebrews, and in both letters to the Corinthians. Paul did not confine himself to enunciating the general principles of ethical conduct. Rather, he was taking direct aim at the checkbooks of his followers.

No doubt they were making as many moans about Paul of Tarsus as we do when people ask us for the poor. The human condition is the human condition no matter what the century. But do keep in mind that Advent is designed to give a serious electrical shock to one’s spiritual nervous system. It is true that Jesus cannot be born again, but, we can. And that really is what Advent is all about. It is unabashedly demanding that we give birth to our best selves.

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



life through their deeds. The chaff will be those who will choose other ways of receiving meaning for their lives.

Throughout this exchange, John continues to distribute the “Good News”. The rejoicing is both the giving and the receiving of the News of the coming of the presence of God. This is a partial reason for the giving of gifts during this Advent and Christmas season. Gifts are meant to express something about the giver, the receiver and something about the relationship between both.

The seven sacraments within the Catholic Church say the same kind of things as gifts of God. During this Advent season, we are encouraged to give each other the sacraments of joy and life. These big and little things are gestures expressive of the giver, the receiver and the relationship between both. God does this in the sending of the Good News in Christ. The things we give must have accompanying notes verbally expressing or making explicit what is being said by the gift. We are saying something about our feelings, our reverence for the receiver, and something explicit about our union or love. The gift says something of the good news about our relationship and the words complete it and make it all a Christmas “Presence” and Christmas sacrament within the present we are sharing.

John was preparing to present Jesus and made it explicit by his preaching. In giving and receiving Christmas sacraments we are symbolizing in our little spiritual way, exactly what God is doing every time we gather at the Eucharist and every time we live out God’s Grace.

—taken from the writings of Tom Lenz and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet.

**WHO AM I?**

Abba Poeman said to Abba Joseph: “Tell me how I can become a monk.” And Joseph replied: “If you want to find rest here and hereafter, say in every occasion: ‘Who am I? and do not judge anyone.’” Abba Poeman was very direct about the level of sanctity cultivated at Scetis and its desert outposts. Every day say to yourself: “Who am I?” On Monday: “Who am I?” Answer: I am the one who is tired of staying here in the desert any longer. It’s not anything like I thought it would be. On Tuesday: “Who am I?” Answer: I am the one who has little enough to give to the world, but I would like to give it anyway. On Wednesday: “Who am I?” Answer: I am not that showoff who brings water to all of us every day. “Who am I?” “Who am I?” “Who am I?” At base, it is a simple enough question — but ask it often enough and answer it truthfully enough and you might, sometime, answer it sincerely enough to know the true answer the next time you look in the mirror — I am the person who pretends to care for people more than I really do. Or, I am the person who talks about the Scriptures, but seldom really sits with them and takes them seriously. Or, I am exhausted being a person who is trying to be faithful to a daily practice — but is not. Or, I am a person who never tells the truth about my family background — which means that I have learned to lie well.

Suddenly the answer to what makes for spiritual transformation becomes plain — I will really be a monk when I put down all my righteousness, am honest about myself, and never again judge another person. The effect is immediate. I am free now. There is nothing anyone can say about me that I have not already admitted about myself. Abba Joseph has enabled me to accept who I am. I don’t need to lie anymore. I am ready to grow again.

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



Who Am I?

**BE FREE:**

The great spiritual task facing me is to so fully trust that I belong to God that I can be free in the world — free to speak even when my words are not received; free to act when my actions are criticized, ridiculed, or considered useless; free also to receive love from people and to be grateful for all the signs of God’s presence in the world. I am convinced that I will truly be able to love the world when I fully believe that I am loved far beyond its boundaries.

—Henri Nouwen

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: REJOICE, CHICKEN LITTLE IS WRONG!**

This Sunday is Gaudete Sunday or Rejoice Sunday. It takes its name from the readings for today, particularly the second reading from Paul's Letter to the Phillipians, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I say it again, rejoice." One way of looking at this Sunday is to focus on the joy that Christmas is only two weeks away. Another way of considering this Sunday is to focus in on the joy of the ancient Hebrews as they heard their prophets tell them that God is coming soon and will remove his judgment against them.

In light of the events of the last number of years, I would like to consider another facet of today's readings. And that facet has this warning: "Don't listen to Chicken Little." We have been so besieged with negativity. A few years ago we heard that the world was coming to an end due to the pandemic. Sometimes we hear that the world as we know it is coming to an end because the enemies of our country have an upper hand against us. During the election we heard that the world would be coming to an end as long as this party remains in power, or that party resumes power. Chicken Little has a full time job at CNN and FOX News. Sadly, many of us have listened to the feathered fowl of distress and believe that he is correct.

When Chicken Little's rantings are added to the normal difficulties of life, people coming down with cancer, heart problems, dying in car accidents, elderly relatives dying, financial difficulties, marital difficulties, problems with various addictions, etc etc, we can easily assume the persona of being a victim to circumstances.

Gaudete Sunday reminds us that this line of thinking is incorrect. We are not victims, flapping our wings trying to fly to no avail, because chickens don't fly. No, we are not Chicken Littles. We are not victims of whatever we think is happening around us. No, we are not victims, we are victors.

Our God loves us so much that He became One of us and One with us. He has showered us with Grace. We sing "Joy to the World," not just as a pleasant Christmas carol, but as a statement of our faith. We believe that God has brought joy to the world. We cannot allow anything, any circumstance to steal this joy from us. Instead of succumbing to the "Woe is Me" attitude, focusing on the negatives of our lives, we need to see the bigger picture, the infinitely bigger picture.

We may not be full of Grace as Mary was, we are not immaculately conceived, but we have received a great deal of Grace. We have been made children of God. Jesus calls us his brothers and sisters. We have received so much Grace that God has transformed even the worst circumstances of our lives in avenues of growth. How often I have done funerals where people have given eulogies saying how their loved one grew closer to God throughout their sickness. A while back I anointed a man who was imminent. His wife told me that his last words were, "I love God." Those were only his last words here. Through the Grace of God, he will have much to say for all eternity.



In my office I have a beautiful portrait of an eight year old girl wearing her First Communion outfit. Her mother was a medic in the navy in Iraq. She was caring for a marine on the battle field when she took a bullet in the head. The marines pulled her out of the battle zone, and the doctors were able to save her life, but she ended up paralyzed on one side. She was determined to get herself back to the best health as she could because she had a daughter to raise. She told me, "I am not a hero. I was just doing my job. I am not a victim either. I am who I am, a mother who has to raise my baby girl." And she had joy, the joy of the Lord. I got to know this young lady because she wanted to have Christ in her life and honored me by asking me to bring her and her child into the Church. (Side bar: As I have written many times, we priests have the best lives ever.) This mother lived for me what Gaudete Sunday is all about. This Sunday reminds us that no matter what is going on in the world, or in our lives, God is in control. Knowing that He is in control brings us joy.

feel that they are not living up to their parents' or grandparents' expectations. When they do something wrong, they fear that they have disappointed others, and are disappointed in themselves. What should parents do? Parents need to have compassion for their children. Guide them in a kind and loving way, while remaining firm on the direction they need to go.

Years ago, a mother in our parish told me that when she went away to college with an appointment to one of the military academies, she thought that surviving that first year would be the hardest thing she would ever have to do. Then she got married and had children. Her second child really gave her a run for her money. This child made the academy seem to be a minor battle. The child was extremely intelligent, in all the advanced, gifted classes, but found school too easy for her. She couldn't see why she had to go to school. Every morning she put up a fight — and I mean a fight. There was a lot of screaming involved — so much so that the Mom had to assure her neighbors that she wasn't beating her kid every day, just trying to get her into the school bus, or, most times since the bus was missed, the car. I'm mentioning this because that second child now has a doctorate. She has a successful career. The Mom now admits that number two was worth every bit of extra effort. The child needed understanding. The child needed compassion. She needed loving parents. But her parents had to be firm in order to prepare her for her role in the Kingdom of God.

When the Lord taught us how to pray, He included the phrase: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." We need to apply this to our family life. All of us have battle stories. All of us have been wronged by others — including those within our own homes. All of us need forgiveness from others. Mostly, though, we need forgiveness from God. But we cannot receive forgiveness unless we are doing our best to give forgiveness.

"What should we do to prepare for the Kingdom of God?" the people asked John the Baptist? — and we ask the Lord today. "Have compassion," the Lord says. "Receive His Mercy, and extend this mercy to others."

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

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

**Monday:** Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a; Matthew 21:23-27

**Tuesday:** Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17

**Wednesday:** Jeremiah 23:5-8, Matthew 1:18-25

**Thursday:** Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Luke 1:5-25

**Friday:** Isaiah 7:10-14, Luke 1:26-38

**Saturday:** Song of Songs 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Luke 1:39-45

**4<sup>th</sup> Week in Advent:** Micah 5:1-4a, Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-45

**EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS:**

We will soon be discerning a new group of Eucharistic Ministers who would undergo training in the spring months. 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.**



**WHAT SHOULD WE DO?**

People took John the Baptist very seriously. They were interested in what he had to say. They responded to his directives. He told them to join him in the fight against sin. They were baptized. He told them to prepare for the Kingdom of God. They asked: “What should we do?”

John answered them by telling them to apply his message to their lives. Tax collectors were told to stop cheating people. Soldiers were told to stop extorting money. People with means, those with two cloaks, were told to share their possessions.

And how do we apply that to ourselves? — “What should we do?” Jesus says: “Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate” [Luke 6:36].

Compassion is defined as having pity and concern for the suffering of others. We need to have compassion on those around us as well as those suffering in our nation and our world. This morning, I want to focus in on the home. The center of the home — the heart of the family — is the Mom. She needs compassion. Husbands need to have compassion for their wives. Those women with children at home — particularly babies and young children — live with the constant pressure of caring for their children. They want everything to be wonderful in the home, but feel that it is mostly on their shoulders. Christmas approaches and they feel overwhelmed with all that needs to be done to create a special time for the family. They spend so much time trying to please others, that they often run out of gas.

When a child becomes sick, women suffer from a hurting heart while they care for their child. Many women hold an 8-hour job at work along with their 24 hour job at home. People tell them that they are enjoying the best years of their lives — even though they often think: “When is the fun going to begin?” They often want to scream at their mothers when their mothers say: “Stop complaining and count your blessings.” Sometimes — perhaps many times — their husbands don’t make an effort to understand them. Well, men will never fully understand women — and vica-versa. But, guys, you need to recognize the sources of their wife’s stress, and support her even if this means nothing more than a little sign of affectionate and appreciation when she least expects it. Certainly, compassion demands that a husband understands that his wife might not be at her best today, but she is always trying her best. What should we do? Well, if you are a husband, you should pray for your wife, support your wife and care for your wife. Or to be more theological, you should extend the compassion of God to your wife.

Husbands also need compassion. They try to support their family very often with jobs they would rather not be doing. I remember my Dad coming home from work and often saying to my Mom: “You know, I wouldn’t do this if they weren’t paying me.” Many men are not as sensitive as most women, and they often misunderstand their wives or their children. When they realize they have done this, they often feel like a burden in their own homes. Regardless of their braggadocio, many men feel like they can’t do anything right — particularly in the home. What should we do? Well, if you are a wife, you should pray for your husband, and let him know that he is doing his best to be a good husband and father. Or, to be more theological, you should extend God’s compassion to your husband.

You parents are well aware of the pressures placed on your children by school, society — and even by members of your extended family. If learning were easy, then children would not have to go to school. Social pressures, learning how to deal with others, diversity, all are essential parts of their education are often more difficult than the hardest class they take. Children — especially Teens — often

BE  
COMPASSIONATE



The sky is falling. We are all going to die of Covid or the next pandemic. The sky is falling. The democrats are in control. The sky is falling, the republicans are going to take control. Nonsense. Nonsense. Nonsense. The only thing that matters is that which comes from God and that which returns to God.

Jesus Christ is the Victor. He is in control of our lives, if we let Him take control of our lives. And yes, this physical life will load us with challenge after challenge, but with Jesus Christ, we can meet each challenge with the joy of knowing that all we need in life is the Presence of the Lord.

And He is coming.

And He has come.

Gaudete. Be joyful!

(Take that, Chicken Little!)

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

**A YOUNG ADULT GROUP:**

The Young Adult group will be holding their **next meeting at 11:45 AM on Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup>**. We will be discussing what it means to be a **Wise Man in today’s world**. Location TBD, because the Chapel & the Lennon Boardroom will be used for taking down the Christmas decorations. Here is an opportunity to get together, share some time in faith, and also to support each other in life’s journey, as we continue to grow and become the people that God wants us to be. If you are interested and would like to be part of this new adventure, please join us at our next meeting, or contact Richard Jones, Stephanie Leonor, Joe Gurney, or Edwin Heryak. Of course, you can also contact Father John at the chapel if that would be easier for you. God bless you.

**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — DECEMBER 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.

**FAITH EDUCATION — DECEMBER and JANUARY DATES:**

Faith Education is an important part of every person’s formation. Please make sure that you have not forgotten this important responsibility. 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**. Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility. **Meeting dates for December are: 15. For January: 12 & 26.**

**A PRAYER:**

Lord, the mission of Jesus is to gather the nations into the peace of your Kingdom. All that we do and are as his disciples should work to bring unity to all God’s children. Lord, we need your help. Amen.

**OUR STRUGGLE TO CELEBRATE:**

It's hard to celebrate properly. We want to, but we don't know how. Mostly we celebrate badly because our idea of celebration is to overdo things. We try to celebrate by taking ordinary things — eating, drinking, singing, telling stories, playing — to excess. Celebration, for many of us, means over-eating, over-drinking, loud socializing, drunken singing, and staying at parties into the wee hours of morning — all in the hope that somehow in all that excess we will achieve celebration — whatever that means. But, for all our frenzied effort, there is precious little genuine enjoyment.

The very purpose of celebration is to heighten and intensify the meaning of something. Occasionally we do succeed and genuinely celebrate. At those times we feel ourselves more deeply joined to others, widened, made larger, made more aware, made more playful, and sense more deeply the love and joy that lie at the heart of life. But that rarely happens, and it never happens when we are in frenzy. Too often our celebrations are followed by a hangover of one kind or another. Why?

The reasons for this are complex, deep, and mostly hidden from us.

Perhaps the primary reason why we find it so difficult to genuinely celebrate is that we seem to lack the capacity to simply enjoy things — to take life, pleasure, love, and enjoyment as a gift from God, pure and simple. It's not that we lack the capacity to do this, it's more that this capacity in us is generally buried under a mound of guilt. What this means is that often we cannot enjoy legitimate pleasure because somehow, however unconsciously, we sense what is articulated in the ancient myths — namely, that in enjoying pleasure we are somehow stealing something from God.

We tend to blame religion for this, but this neurosis is universal — as much outside of religious circles as inside of them. Somehow, in the name of the divine, most everyone feels guilt in pleasure.

And because of this, we tend to alternate between rebellious enjoyment — “pleasure we steal from God” — and joyless duty — a dutiful life, but without genuine pleasure and enjoyment. We never seem to be able to genuinely celebrate. I say genuinely because, paradoxically, our incapacity to enjoy is the very thing that pushes us into pseudo-celebration, hedonism, and an unhealthy pursuit of pleasure.

Simply put, because we struggle to enjoy ourselves simply we pursue enjoyment too much and substitute excess for enjoyment.

And this often leads to a dangerous confusion wherein we substitute pleasure for enjoyment, excess for ecstasy, and the obliteration of consciousness for heightened awareness. The champagne-soaked athletes celebrating a major victory and the mindless frenzy of a Mardi Gras give us all the video footage we need to understand this. But excess isn't enjoyment, nor is obliterated consciousness heightened awareness. They are weak, unsatisfying substitutes.

The very purpose of celebration is to heighten and intensify the meaning of something — a birthday, a wedding, a major achievement, a victory, a graduation, the birth of a child, the beginning or ending of a year. These events demand to be shared, heightened, widened, and trumpeted. We have a congenital need to celebrate and this is very healthy.

What does it mean to celebrate something? To celebrate an occasion is to heighten it, share it, savor it, and enlarge it. We also celebrate in order to link ourselves more fully to others, to be playful, to intensify a feeling, to bring ourselves to ecstasy, and, more commonly, just to rest and unwind. But because of our incapacity to enjoy something simply we often try to create that enjoyment through excess



As I said at the beginning — I used to downplay the power of the rosary. I used to think that it wasn't a “powerful” form of prayer. I was very wrong. As I have been revisiting the rosary myself, Mary and Jesus have been hitting me over the head with “grace-bombs” lately — and it has been incredible.

Maybe you relate, and you too have been questioning the power of the rosary. Maybe you are intimidated by the amount of time you think it takes to pray the rosary, or maybe you feel it is too confusing to keep track of all these mysteries and beads we pray in the rosary. If you're thinking or feeling any of these things, I want to invite you to revisit the rosary this week — maybe even right now — grab your beads and start praying.

Warning — receiving grace-bombs is a common event, for one who is faithfully praying the rosary. Prepare to be blessed. —taken from the writings of Nick Longo, a Youth Minister

**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.



**ADVENT DEVOTIONS:**

On the table in the narthex of the Chapel are several Advent devotionals to assist you in your spiritual journey during this season of Advent. We hope that you will make use of them for you and your family. [1] **The Little Blue Book** with daily readings and devotions. This book corresponds to “The Little Black Book” that is so popular during Lent. [2] The daily scripture devotion, **The Word Among Us**, is available. It lists the scripture passage for the day along with a short reflection on one of the passages.



**2025 CALENDARS:**

Calendars for the year 2025 are available for your taking. Besides having space for you to write your family appointments, the calendar also contains information about Mass and Reconciliation times here at Our Lady Chapel. We wish to thank the Schulte-Mahon-Murphy Funeral Homes for their generous donation of these 2025 Calendars to us. Please feel free to take as many calendars as you would like. Thank you.



**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.

<b>Total Offerings: Saturday [12/7/24]</b>	_____	<b>\$ 815.00</b>
<b>Total Offerings: Saturday [12/8/24]</b>	_____	<b>\$ 509.00</b>
<b>Total Offerings: Monday [12/9/24] Immaculate Conception</b>	_____	<b>\$ 22.00</b>



**REVISITING THE ROSARY:**

Recently, I read a book about the rosary, which has forever changed my prayer life and relationship with the Lord and our Blessed Mother. I have to be honest — before reading this book, I would downplay the Rosary as just a “simple and structured way of prayer.” I’m not sure how you understand that, but to me, those words don’t describe an understanding, passion, or true belief that the Rosary is a real and powerful way to encounter our Blessed Mother’s Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. I would say things like: “Oh the Rosary is a good way to disciple your life and begin to pray.” Of course, that statement is true, but the way I was talking about the rosary and the way I meant that statement was almost, in a way, belittling the Holy prayer.

After reading that book, I decided I was missing out on the real power of the rosary and needed to revisit it. In doing so, I began to realize the real power of the rosary. This amazing form of prayer is a true a spiritual weapon that defends me in the battle of spiritual warfare. It helps me more deeply know Jesus every day as it guides me through the mysteries of His life and passion. The rosary has started to change my life, and I know that it will change your life, too, and lead you closer to Mary’s son, Jesus Christ.

Here are the four things that I took away from that book that might help you revisit the rosary in a powerful way:

1. **You don’t always need to pray the entire rosary — although that is awesome if you do!** In our busy lives, the rosary can be an intimidating prayer because we immediately think things like: “who has 20 minutes for a rosary! — maybe later.” And then we never get around to doing it. You don’t need to pray the entire rosary to make the prayer work for your spirit. Pull out your beads and spend 2 minutes and 30 seconds — literally, I timed it — to pray a decade and think about a moment from Jesus’s life.
2. **Carry your rosary beads with you.** This has been a game changer for me. Just having my rosary beads with me during my day has become a kind of prayer reminder each day. It has also helped me in moments when I’m struggling or feeling anxiety, knowing I have my beads with me and reaching for them makes me aware of God’s presence and Mary’s mantle of love and protection with me in the tough times.
3. **Quality over quantity, when praying.** As with any prayer, this is an important note. The quality of the prayer is more important than the quantity of prayer. One intentional Hail Mary that you sit with and truly consider what God wants you to take away from this moment with Him can often be more fruitful than one quickly prayed decade that you tried to get through just to check it off your list. So, focus on the quality of each prayer — even if that means you sit with one intentionally prayed Hail Mary for a while.
4. **Pray with the Mysteries of the Rosary.** I found one of those small little rosary pamphlets that you can pretty much find at any church you walk into, and began to read daily each of the daily rosary mysteries. These rosary meditations are easily obtained via the *Laudate* App where you can find the rosary mysteries and more amazing Catholic prayerful goodness! I would carry around the mysteries and prayerfully read through them, and over time they became dedicated to my memory. This has done wonders for my prayer life — especially to help focus my prayer when I’m struggling to pray. I will sit and reflect on the mysteries of the rosary — which are the best Bible study you’ll ever get. I believe now that there is no easier way to focus on Jesus and get to know him than prayerfully reflecting on His life and passion in the mysteries of the rosary. You can even dive deeper into praying with these moments of Jesus’ life by trying a Scriptural rosary — try it, you won’t be disappointed!



and seek the ecstasy of heightened self-awareness in the obliteration of our consciousness.

Small wonder that we often trudge home with a hangover, emptier, more tired, and more alone. A hangover is an infallible sign that somewhere we missed a signpost.

But we must continue to try. Christ came and declared a wedding, a feast, a celebration, at the heart of life. He shocked people as much by the way he enjoyed his life as by the way he gave it up. In the end, he was rejected as much for his message of enjoyment as for his message of asceticism. That is still true today. We tend to read the gospels selectively so as to ignore Jesus’ positive challenge to enjoy without guilt.

And in that lies our problem. Because we are never challenged religiously and in the name of Jesus, to enjoy, deeply and without guilt, the very human pleasures of our lives, our healthy, God-given, need for pleasure and enjoyment tends to go underground. We still seek pleasure and enjoyment, but now we split them off from what is religious and holy and “steal them from God” rather than enjoy them simply and religiously. That is one of the main reasons why we substitute excess for enjoyment and an obliterated consciousness for heightened awareness.

God has given us permission to enjoy life and its pleasures. That truth too needs to be a central part of our religious teaching. Pleasure is God’s gift — not the forbidden fruit.

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

**JOY:**

Many people have a hard time experiencing joy because life is unfair. Here’s an example: my older brother has a full head of wavy hair. I went bald when I was twenty! People assume he is younger than me. Even though he’s in his seventies — and happily married — women flock to him. Life is unfair! While my example is humorous, other injustices are no laughing matter — they can break your heart and even break your spirit. A good example is when a deadly disease afflicts a young person. Who can have joy in the face of such a tragedy? Hardship strikes one family and not another. Nature — or God — seems unfair. Perhaps even worse than those natural injustices are the ones we inflict on each other. Take the many instances of domestic cruelty, or abuse by those in authority or positions of power. In the face of all this, we can start brooding about unjust treatment — or unfair, hurtful words — and we are robbed of joy.

What is the answer? John the Baptist tells us in Luke’s Gospel that God will sort things out. God comes with a winning fan which separates wheat from chaff. The good he keeps, the worthless he burns [Luke 3:10-18]. This does not mean that we do nothing to combat injustice. On the contrary, our hope for final justice strengthens us to work for fairness. Remember, the poor box in the temple in Jerusalem had the word “justice” written on it. Justice is all about right relationships.

The word justice appears 157 times in the Bible. Joy is more frequent — 201 times. That does not include words related to joy such as “rejoice” — 261 times. We can only do so much to bring justice into the world but we can do a lot to bring joy into our hearts. St. Paul reminds us: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I say it again, rejoice!” [Philippians 4:4-7]. Paul is not making a suggestion — it is a command — Rejoice! Rejoice always! And the prophet Zephaniah says: “Sing joyfully, O Israel” [Zephaniah 3:14-18]. Do you have a joyful song in in your heart?

As the birth of Jesus approaches, our hearts need to be filled with joy — “Sing joyfully, O Israel!” Yes, life can be unfair — painfully and incomprehensibly unfair. And we do live in a world of cruelty and injustice that only God can set right. While we can only do small acts of justice, we can do a lot to open our hearts to joy.

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

### ARE WE WAITING FOR SOMEONE WHO IS ALREADY HERE?

One of the problems with the Scripture Readings used in our liturgical celebration of Advent is that many of us logically employ them to prepare for Christmas — forgetting that none of them were composed for that purpose. This is especially true on this “Rejoice [Gaudete] Sunday.” Our sacred authors aren’t rejoicing over the future coming of Jesus at Bethlehem — they’re joyfully reflecting on the God already in their midst.

Few prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures zero in on this belief better than Zephaniah [3:14-18]. Active during the late 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE reign of the reforming king Josiah, the prophet ends his short collection of oracles with a basic reminder to people of faith that no matter what’s happening around us — no matter how confusing the life we live, no matter the tensions we constantly experience — “God is in your midst, a mighty savior; he will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, he will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals.”

We must never forget that the historical Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed the same message at the beginning of his public ministry, reminding his disciples that God’s kingdom is so close, we can extend our hand and touch it [Mark 1:15]. God is present and working effectively in each of our lives.

Luke was convinced that the morality flowing from this conviction of the presence of God’s kingdom was so powerful that it trumped even what was taught and experienced by the prophetic reformer John the Baptizer. Though the evangelist certainly agreed with John’s command to share what we have with those who have nothing, to stop extorting money from the helpless, and to cease lying about others’ actions, he was convinced that Jesus’ arrival would usher in an even deeper way of relating to God and the people around us. For the evangelist, the unique ritual which would symbolize this new covenant wouldn’t be just a “water” baptism — it would come “with the Holy Spirit and fire” [Luke 3:10-18]

Serious students of Scripture respect the importance of the Spirit in Luke/Acts. Writing in the mid-80’s, the evangelist and his community know just the risen Jesus. As far as we can determine, none had ever personally encountered the itinerant Galilean preacher who lived and taught during the first third of the first century CE. They experienced only the “new creation” who was neither Jew nor Gentile, slave or free, male or female. And it was the Spirit who helped them surface that risen Jesus in their daily lives.

Unlike his mentor, the Baptizer, who was constantly looking for the arrival of the Lord — the historical Jesus was convinced that God was already present, day by day working effectively in everything and everyone they experienced. Though John thought the morality which he expected his followers to practice would hasten the Lord’s coming into this world, Jesus was convinced that the love of neighbor which he preached was simply the essential way to surface the God already here.

No wonder Paul encourages his Philippian community to rejoice [Philippians 4:4-7]. He certainly wants the risen Jesus to quickly come in a triumphant “Parousia” — to complete the salvation he had achieved by his death and resurrection. But in the meantime, he reminds his followers that Jesus, as Lord is among us here and now. Why would anyone waste their time longing for someone who’s already here?

Centuries after the historical Jesus’ resurrection, when we began to celebrate his birthday, we also must realize that we employ our Advent readings in ways their authors could never have imaged. Forgetting about the upcoming “Johnny come lately” feast of Christmas, we should again hear these passages in their original settings. Interesting what messages we surface when we dare do that.

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

### THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN JOY:

In Paul’s letter to the Church at Philippi, he makes the emphatic statement: “Rejoice in the Lord always; I shall say it again: rejoice!” [Philippians 4:4-7]. Paul goes on to say: “Have no anxiety at all,” but offer prayers of petition and gratitude to God. As we reflect on this positive message, it is helpful to recall that Paul wrote it when he was languishing in a Roman prison — possibly facing death. Paul is no utopian dreamer urging superficial joy out of touch with reality. He grounds joy not in an optimistic assessment of life situations, but in the presence of Christ. Christians can avoid anxiety because “the Lord is near.”

The crucified and risen Christ is present to us in multiple ways, playing “in ten-thousand places”, as the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins vividly expressed this truth. Christ is present in our hearts through the animating power of the Holy Spirit, in the scriptures as the normative witness to his life and teachings, in other people — especially in the needy, as he taught, and, when we gather for the Eucharist — in the assembly, the Liturgy of the Word, and the consecrated bread and wine. Paul admonishes us to rejoice always because Christ is ever present at the very center of our daily lives.

Mother Teresa — now the canonized Saint of Calcutta — can serve as an instructive example of Christian joy that is authentic, realistic and abiding. We recall that she left a happy home at the age of 18, joined the Sisters of Our Lady of Loreto, and taught in a Catholic High School in Calcutta for a number of years. On September 10, 1946, while travelling on a train, Christ called her “to go out in the streets to serve the poorest of the poor.” She followed this vocation for five decades always with a joyful smile on her face.

As we now know, however, she did so at a great price — without any further encouraging words from the Lord, without any sense of spiritual consolation. She felt abandoned by Christ, suffering “pain without ceasing” and “untold agony.” She continued to speak publicly about “the tender love of God,” and yet privately admitted to her spiritual director: “no light or inspiration enters my soul,” leaving her with the “terrible pain of loss of God not wanting me.” After a decade of such spiritual suffering, she took the advice of her spiritual director and came “to love the darkness,” which brought her “a deep joy.” For the rest of her life, the Saint of Calcutta, ministered to Christ present in the poorest of the poor, radiating inner joy that passes all understanding.

Many people have been inspired by the joyful spirit of Mother Teresa. For example, a nurse who sees a lot of human suffering tries hard to present a cheerful, upbeat spirit to her patients. A father with a rather pessimistic outlook on life tries not to project that attitude on his children, while showing by example how his faith sustains him. A widow, who still grieves deeply the loss of her beloved husband, attempts to maintain a joyful spirit around her grandchildren.

What can you learn from Mother Teresa about the practice of Christian joy?

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

### SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

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

