

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

**~ A Prayer of Baptismal Promise ~**

Father,  
I believe that  
I do not just happen to exist —  
I have been planned in your love,  
And gifted with your spirit.

I come today  
to listen for the word you speak,  
to commune in prayer,  
to offer myself  
in Christ.

For the gift of life  
and faith,  
I thank you.

I ask your help  
to live my baptismal promise —  
to be more like Jesus  
releasing people from evil,  
and doing good works.  
Let me glorify your name, O God,  
in every face that I encounter,  
in every person that I am called to serve.

Lord,  
grasp me by the hand,  
renew your Spirit within me.  
make me your good servant,  
for I am baptized  
in 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.*

**THE BAPTISM OF JESUS AND THE CHRISTMAS SEASON:**

This weekend, we celebrate the Feast of the **Baptism of Jesus**. With it, we draw a close to the **Christmas Season**. Jesus' baptism publicly inaugurates the reign of God. This is the kingdom to which all people are called. Thus, the intimacy of the Christmas story unfolds into the endless baptismal mission of all Christians. The story of Christmas is now the story of each person's daily life.

Think about this: on the last day of Christmas, my true Love — Jesus — gave to me a deeper life in the Spirit. On the last day of Christmas, my true Love — the Holy Spirit — cried out in my heart: “Abba” [“Father”]. On the last day of Christmas, my true Love — God the Father — revealed Jesus to me in a new way and gave me an even deeper life in the Spirit. On the last day of Christmas, I was caught in the crossfire of the Trinity's love — the Father spoke; Jesus saved; the Spirit descended.

Are you ready to “grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love, and to experience this love which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God Himself?” [Ephesians 3:18-19]. Are you ready to be loved as the Father loves Jesus? On this last day of Christmas, will you let the love of God be poured out in your heart through the Holy Spirit?

“God is Love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” [1 John 4:16]. Christmas is all about God's love. Make this the moment, the day, the year, and the life of love. Thank you, God, for the gift of the Christmas season. I will never be the same because of it. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I live in Your love [John 15:10]. Thank You for the Christmas.

**FAITH EDUCATION RESUMES THIS WEEK:**

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 January: 12-26; February 2-9-23.**

**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, Heryak, Orehek, Tran, and Wyrwas families.** We will publish the names of your loved ones in the Bulletin as a memorial throughout the Christmas season.

**A YOUNG ADULT GROUP:**

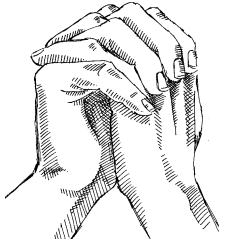
The Young Adult group will be holding their **next meeting at 11:45 AM on Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup>**. **We will be discussing what it means to be a “Wise Man” in today's world.** Location TBD, because the Chapel & the Lennon Boardroom will be used for taking down the Christmas decorations. Here 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.

**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 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 Father Larry Jerge, C.S.C., who is under the care of hospice
- For Thomas Noble who is undergoing treatment for cancer.

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Elaine Willey, sister of Father John [anniversary]
- For President Jimmy Carter
- For Father Thomas Lemos, C.S.C.
- For Margaret Thompson, friend of Joyce Toth.
- For Grace Strapka
- For Alex Lin, a senior at Hoban High School.
- For James O'Hara, brother of Father Thomas O'Hara, C.S.C.
- For Kathleen Boland, sister of Richard [\*63] and Maureen [\*73] Boland, and aunt of Mary Grace Krapf [\*15]
- For Robert Hovde, father of Matt Hovde, C.S.C.
- For Doris Peck, sister of Brother Roy Smith, C.S.C.
- For Father Ned Weist,
- For Mary Livingston, mother of David Livingston [\*90] and former Gilmour specialist, Kate Wetherbee, mother-in-law of Kate Oviatt [\*89]
- For John Shutter, grandfather of Josh Shutter, C.S.C.
- For Tim Pozsgai, father of Tim Pozsgai [\*98], and grandfather of Tyler Pozsgai [\*28]
- For Timothy Laganke, grandfather of Casey Lennon [\*30]

**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].



**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — JANUARY 18<sup>th</sup>:**

Our Savior Lutheran Church — across the street from the Chapel — has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on the **third Saturday of each month**. They welcome volunteers. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help unloading the trailers and setting up items for distribution and preparing for the food pantry to open. It serves around 150 clients each time. The food pantry serves clients from 9:30 AM—1:30 PM on Saturday.**



Our Savior Lutheran’s Food Pantry was formed to serve those in emergency situations and/or with on-going need in the cities of Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Highland Heights and Gates Mills. The Food Pantry respects social and cultural diversity and upholds the worth and dignity of those it serves. All those in the area with need will be served equally, as supplies allow. The food pantry is a member of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. Please join us for a great experience.

**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.

**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 [1/4/25] \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 60.00**  
**Total Offerings: Sunday [1/5/25] \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 89.00**

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

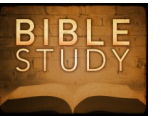
Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

- For the victims of the wild fires in California
- For the victims of the earthquake in China.
- For the victims of the victims of the mass killing in New Orleans and for their families.
- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas, and Russia and Ukraine.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For an end to violence in our society in all of its forms.
- 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, January 30<sup>th</sup>:**

**Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Thursday, January 30<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: What is the Jubilee Year**

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, January 12: <b>Baptism of Jesus</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b> In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, January 13:	<b>9:15 AM</b>
Tuesday, January 14:	<b>NO MASS</b>
Wednesday, January 15:	<b>1:15 PM</b>
Thursday, January 16:	<b>NO MASS</b>
Friday, January 17: <b>St. Anthony</b>	<b>NO MASS</b>
Saturday, January 18 <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time</b>	<b>5:00 PM</b> In Person only
Sunday, January 19: <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b> In-Person & Live Stream

**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.



**THE PROMISE OF LIFE IN BAPTISM:**

In ancient thought, it was believed that there were four elements that represented the entirety of the world: air, earth, fire and water. We see today the play of these in the drama that unfolds at the River Jordan. John the Baptist proclaims that “the one mightier than I will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire”, and we remember that the word “spirit” in Greek also means breathe or air, and that the movement of air in our lungs enables us to live [Luke 3:15-16,21-22].

Luke notes that “Jesus was praying immediately after His baptism”, and it was at that very moment that the voice of the Father came from heaven. Given our baptismal identification with the Lord, the Father’s words are addressed also to us: “you are my beloved (son or daughter); with you I am well pleased”. Luke’s of the last day of the Christmas Season concludes with this declaration of God’s love for each of us.

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

Once again, the wonderful days of the Christmas season have filled us with confidence and hope through the Good News of the Gospel: “The Word became flesh and dwelled among us.” This Word is Jesus, born in a hastily improvised birthplace in Bethlehem, visited by Shepherds and Kings and raised in the obscurity of the backwater town of Nazareth. These details remind us of the importance not only of the fact that the Son of God chose to become one with us in our human nature, but the way he chose to be one with us — in simplicity, poverty, and obscurity. Each of us has been on the same journey from baptism through growing up and becoming truly alive. Much is asked of us, and we in turn ask much of God Who calls us. We pray for the simplicity of heart which is born and inspired through water and the Holy spirit. We may pray that our experience of living that New Life will extend the New Light through our years.

The Feast of the Baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of Jesus’ public life; it does not veer from the course charted by the previous feasts. Rather, it reinforces and deepens what we have seen of Jesus. Jesus begins his public life in the humility of John’s baptism, in the guise of a servant. Isaiah helps us see how he will appear, day after day, in the cities and villages of Israel, “not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench” [Isaiah 42:1-7].

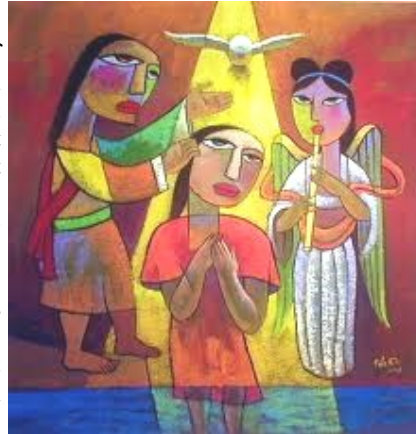
The white garment of our own baptism may be less white as our hair grows whiter. Each time we enter into the celebration of the Eucharist, we renew our baptism by signing ourselves with holy water recalling the words by which we were initiated into that holy assembly. Water is all about life, and the Holy Spirit enlivens. We re-enter into Christ’s saving action in the Eucharist and are re-membered into the community no matter how much we may have wandered in the past. We are re-blessed to be re-sent no matter how white our hair may be.

The prophet Isaiah [42:1-7] presents us with the first of the four Servant Songs. Israel as a nation — and each of us — is referred to as the Servant of the Lord. What we hear seems to be an exact prediction of a special person of history who will assist God in caring for the people and nation of Israel itself. This person will have God as his or her support; this person will have qualities of justice, and calmness of spirit and action.

There is a strong sense of the Messiah in Isaiah’s preaching — justice will be his theme, and by his teaching those physically and spiritually blind will see, and those in various conditions of confinement will be liberated. All the songs, poems, predictions, and reflections of Isaiah are meant to encourage the people to have hope as they wait for freedom from exile. Here they are inspired by the prophet who tells them of a coming of a someone who will actually bring justice, hope, and freedom to their lives.

Luke’s Gospel [3:15-16, 21-22] is the first person-to-person meeting described in scripture between John the Baptist and Jesus. They had met womb-to-womb when Mary visited John’s mother, Elizabeth [Luke 1:39-45]. The Baptism of Jesus finds John carrying out his mission of righteousness by pouring the water of purification upon those seeking cleansing in the Jordan. Jesus presents Himself for this ministry, and John wants Jesus to not ask for baptism. John is not worthy, but Jesus asks to have the law fulfilled.

When the Law has been fulfilled and Jesus emerges from the waters of the Law, Jesus sees and hears Who He is to the Father — He is the one in Whom the Father is well-pleased. It is now public, and God’s Spirit will urge Him to stay faithful to this New Law of living according to the Spirit. His identity

**READING THE SIGNS:**

Probably most of us won’t find out God’s exact plan for us until we eventually meet God face to face. Yet, I presume that the longer we live, the more we catch glimpses of that plan. That appears to be the case with many of our biblical prophets. The prophet’s biblical call is always the last part of a prophetic book to be written. Only after years of carrying out their God-given ministries are some of these special people able to make sense out of their work.

This certainly applies to Isaiah [42:1-7]. Isaiah begins by sharing with us his initial reflection on his call. Referred to as the First Song of the Suffering Servant, it will eventually be followed by two others — and end with a fourth reflection which his followers put together after his death. As in all such calls, there’s something “generic” — in this case, Isaiah is called to be a prophet — someone who has God’s spirit. But he’s also called to exercise that ministry in a very unique way.

Isaiah is a prophet like none before him — Isaiah is not to imitate the “in-your-face” style which many of his prophetic predecessors employed. He doesn’t cry out nor shout, doesn’t make his voice heard in the street — He’s extremely low key. And instead of withering his audience with his oracles, he tries to build them up — “A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench”.

More importantly, the message that Isaiah proclaims will reach far beyond the exiled Israelites whom he addresses — “He shall bring justice to the nations; the coastlands will wait for his teaching.” Nations and coastlands are Jewish words for non-Jews. His ministry will eventually provide faith insights to people who know nothing of the 613 laws of Moses. Isaiah’s words will affect more people than he could ever reach in his lifetime — and we are included in this people.

In a parallel way, the earliest followers of Jesus eventually began to understand that the reform of Judaism that Jesus preached was reaching far beyond Judaism. That realization is one of the reasons Luke composed his Acts of the Apostles — he was trying to show how a religious movement which began 100% Jewish in the early 30’s, was rapidly becoming 100% Gentile by the mid-80’s. Of course, Luke presumes that the hand of God played the decisive role in this unforeseen development — prompting Peter not only to go to the Gentile Cornelius’ house, but to eventually baptize everyone there [see Acts 10]. But it was far easier for Luke, writing almost 50 years after Peter’s ministry, to understand the implications of Cornelius’ conversion than it was for first generation Jewish Christians. Recall that Peter was later “called on the carpet” for his actions by the Jerusalem Christian “authorities” [see Acts 15] — it took a long time before almost everyone agreed with Peter’s statement that “God shows no partiality” [Acts 10:34].

Likewise, Luke’s community would have understood the implications of Jesus’ baptism in a far deeper way than those standing around the Galilean carpenter at the Jordan on the day it actually took place [Luke 3]. As Raymond Brown points out to us, recall that scriptural annunciations are for the author’s readers — not for the people who biblically receive them. Our sacred authors create annunciations to convey meaning which he or she have only surfaced after much reflection. When Luke’s Jesus, for instance, hears the voice from heaven proclaim: “You are my beloved son; with you I am well pleased!” it is important to remember that it’s much easier for us to surface divinity in Jesus than it would have been for those who historically came into contact with him. Perhaps one of the most anticipated rewards of getting into heaven just might be the discovery of what we were actually doing here on earth.

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

**A SIMPLE FORMULA:**

If you don’t love it, you’ll never be great at it. Do what you love. Love what you do.

**THE PRECEDENT JESUS SET:**

My dad grew up with two relatives who were eccentric, to say the least. One was an uncle who showed up periodically to sleep on the front porch — often deciding that clothing was an unnecessary inconvenience in hot weather. Another, an aunt who lived outside of the city, would throw stones at Dad and Grandpa when they arrived after making a 10-mile bike ride to bring her food. Dad never talked much about those two. I learned about them from my mom, who knew the stories from her mother-in-law — who was not the blood relative of the folks in question.

I thought about the family response to these characters as I studied the Gospel accounts of Jesus' baptism [see Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:7-11, and Luke 3:15-16,21-22]. All make a connection between John and Jesus, but only Mark and Matthew admit that Jesus went to John for baptism. John avoids any mention of Jesus' baptism, although in one place, John says that Jesus baptized others — and shortly thereafter, denied it [see John 4:1-2]. Luke trips over the subject, saying: “After all the people had been baptized and Jesus had also been baptized.” Scripture scholars will tell us that these runarounds assure us that Jesus was baptized by John and that it was an embarrassment to the Gospel writers and their communities. They worried about depicting Jesus as a follower of John.

In contrast to admitting the fact of his baptism, all four Gospels affirm that the Spirit played a part in Jesus' experience and that after his baptism, he, and sometimes others, heard a heavenly voice proclaim that Jesus was God's beloved and deeply pleasing Son. As they tell it, the evangelists all agreed that Jesus' unique relationship with God was the key element of the story. Why did he ask for baptism?

John's baptism called people to metanoia — a change of heart and mind that would prepare them to recognize how God was working among them. Baptism expressed a commitment and a desire to be ready for the one coming to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Much to the chagrin of many — then and now — Jesus' baptism reveals that he was an ordinary and deeply religious man who had to grow and pray and seek the movement of the Spirit in his life and in the world around him. Rather than think of him as a divine character pretending to be one of us, we know Jesus as God's image and the model of what human beings can be. Paul's letter to the Church at Philippi tells us that the divine Son of God abandoned all privilege in order to share the human experience [see Philippians 2:5-11]. Like any pious Jew who sought to please God and be among God's faithful, Jesus knew Isaiah's description of God's servant who would gently and quietly embody a new covenant between God and humanity [Isaiah 42:1-7]. His decision to accept baptism expressed his commitment to fulfill the role to which God called the chosen people.

While Jesus' baptism revealed his simple humanity, the heavenly message he heard singled him out — “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased”. What an announcement! Before Jesus had begun any public ministry, he heard the proclamation that he was God's own, and that God was pleased with him. What must it have felt like to hear that? What kind of faith did it take to believe that he was truly of God? What about him was already pleasing God? In order to explore these questions, Jesus spent a symbolic 40 days alone in the desert wrestling with just how he could fulfill the Father's will in his time and place. Jesus came out of his desert retreat ready to do nothing but incarnate God's love for the world. Some people experienced him as just that, someone in whom they encountered God. Others saw him as a rule-breaking, oft-blasphemous, eccentric.

Eccentric was right on target — and was the basis of other similar labels. Eccentric means “off center,” unusual, centered in something different. That's Jesus. Not centered in himself, but on the Father and what the Father loves.

This is where our baptismal commitment comes in. We are baptized into Christ as people pleasing to God, destined to be centered outside ourselves. Baptism aims to free us from what Pope Francis calls “the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures.” Baptism is supposed to make us eccentric like Jesus — people who get noticed because their behavior falls outside the “norm.” It will also slowly form us as living members of the body of Christ, human beings becoming all that God hopes we can be.

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

will be challenged and others will doubt, but Jesus Himself will not shout out in the streets, but present the gentleness and justice of God. He will not quench the small flames nor bruise a tender reed, but give breath and life for the light and life of all.

Have you ever been to a family baptism — celebrating the new life of not only family, but also the Church? We have all seen the joys of their parents and grandparents. As part of the ceremony, we would all renew our vows — and, hopefully, our own spirits of trying. Relatives would pass the child around the family circle, and each prayed a special prayer of welcome and blessing. You can always see the look of hope, and the prayer that each person prays — not only for the newly born, but also for themselves. Everyone wishes that the new member be a person in whom others will find a peaceful place. Everyone prays that the child will grow in wisdom, and lead others by that wisdom to a sense of justice. Everyone prays a sincere prayer that the child will bring light and life into the lives of all whom they meet. But in reality, everyone is praying, not so much for the child, but for themselves as they really are and as others find them. It seems that what is important to “who we are”, we pray that same grace for others, and that our graces be used well.

We are baptized into Jesus' being the Beloved of the Father. We are equally baptized into our being sent to extend Jesus life and Spirit into this world. The likelihood is that we are already living that grace. We always want more of all good things. We want more of God's good spirit. We have been immersed in it; and it is good on this day of Jesus' Baptism to reflect on the truth of how we are extending his Light — hearing and speaking his goodness and keeping our garments clean. We are invited to hear ourselves what Jesus heard on the day of his baptism until his death — we are beloved, and God is well-pleased with us as we try.

How important it is that we fix our attention on the manner of Jesus' appearance. At times, people of our day — much like the people of Jesus' own day — seem to hope for a different kind of appearing — one that “fixes things” efficiently and quickly, that manifests power as we know it on earth: forceful, loud, sometimes even crushing and violent. We want our wrongs righted, one way or another! But not this Servant, this Lord. And so, we have a choice to make: Will we have the courage and the humility to right this world's wrongs with him, his way? Or will we choose the ways that seem more “expedient, effective, productive”? Let us walk in this new year, choosing him, choosing his way, so that we may be his instruments at work in the world.

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

**2024 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS:**

**If you would like a copy of your 2024 Contributions to Our Lady Chapel, please call the chapel office [440-473-3560] and we will be glad to send it out to you.**

We have been doing it this way for a number of years now. We have found in the past that many have their own records and do not need to receive this statement. As good stewards, we are trying to cut postage expenses from a mass mailing. Let us know if you need the statement sent to you and we will be glad to get it to you. Thanks for your under-

**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.



**BAPTISM and COMMITMENT:**

When did Jesus know who He really was? We can reasonably assume that as a little boy He grew into knowledge of who He was. Somewhere — and I am speaking here of Jesus in his human nature — He moved from being a little boy to being a young man, and along the way He became aware of the fact that He had a unique relationship with our Father in heaven. In His maturation he came to know who He really was and that would determine His destiny in life.

We cannot possibly pinpoint when that realization came to full flower. But certainly at His baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptizer, Jesus was given a glimpse of who he was — as the Father sees him. Certainly, at that moment, He was committing Himself to the destiny that lay in front of Him. A booming voice from heaven proclaimed: “You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests.” Jesus knew that our heavenly Father had special plans for Him. But in His human nature He could not know all of the details of precisely how that would be worked out. Nevertheless, He made His commitment.

Making a commitment is the most important part of any great task that we undertake. But it’s not the only thing. We need to acquire education and knowledge. We need to practice and develop our skills. The highly challenging task of being a mother or a father draws up from deep within us everything we have. We don’t enter parenthood with an Operators Manual given us when a child is born. We get an Operators Manual when we buy a VCR, but we certainly don’t get one with the birth of a child. And getting married and having a family is an adventure in which we are trained on the job. We can never adequately know ahead of time all what we’ll need to know in order to be good husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. And, certainly in the seminary, I didn’t receive all that I needed in order to develop into being a reasonably decent priest. I’ve had to learn that while on the job — something that many people had to suffer!.

But in spite of all that we may have or not have, the one thing that is absolutely essential is commitment. Nothing at all of lasting value happens without commitment. It may not be everything that’s needed, but it is the key element. Nothing else will work without it. And there’s nothing easy about commitment. The culture that surrounds us sends us many messages that work against the keeping of our commitments. I’m not saying that all movies and all TV shows are bad. There are really good movies about commitment and keeping one’s promises. But clearly our surrounding culture promotes self-interest, not self-sacrifice.



Thankfully we do, from time to time, come upon stories and accounts of heroic and noble men and women who honor their commitments no matter what it costs them. We hear of mothers and fathers who stay with their children through horrible sicknesses and terrible misfortunes, giving them their message of faithful and steadfast caring love. And we hear stories and accounts of men and women of great nobility and great character who, who at terrible costs to themselves, maintain their commitments to loved ones, to friends and to noble causes, all in great self-sacrifice.

Commitment is the key element of all noble adventures, wonderful discoveries, and heroic human deeds. Jesus started with it. So did Mary, His mother. Likewise, St. Joseph remained faithful to his commitments. And we know that our children are better off in the caring love of committed amateurs than they would be with professionals, however skilled, who must only regard them as clients. But when you find a skilled professional who is at the same time give committed love... well, then you’ve really hit gold.

Casual friendships can be fun like we see on television. But they can, at the same time, be deadly. Think of how young men and women have been ravaged by superficial promises. Look at what happens to people who treat sexual intimacy as something that is merely casual and fun. The excitement of a casual and superficial lifestyle quickly leads to depression, a sense of emptiness, loss, degradation, and

Rather he speaks with a clarity that leaves almost no room for vagueness or false sentiment. He begins by a certain “via negative” — telling us that, if in our lives there is “lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outburst of rage, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factionalism, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like”, then we are not living in the spirit — pure and simple. Conversely, we are living in the Spirit when, in our lives, there is “charity, joy, peace, patience, endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity” [see Galatians 5].

This is a valuable insight because, if we take Paul’s words seriously, we can never delude ourselves into identifying true life in the Spirit with what it is so often confused with — namely, false piety and over-privatized sentiment in pious circles, and confrontation out of hurt, paranoia, and narrow loyalties in both liberal and conservative circles. When the fruits of the Spirit are absent — irrespective of how spiritually confident and self-righteous we might feel, or how right our cause might seem — then the Spirit too is absent. We must be clear about this.

The Spirit is present only when charity, joy, peace, patience, endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity are deeply in our lives — and permeate the air around us.

The Holy Spirit, as classically defined in theology, is “the love between the God and Christ, the Father, and the Son.” It is in meditating on this concept that we come to some understanding of what it means to live in the Spirit. Let’s elaborate on this by using an image — that of a romantic love in its peak fervor.

Imagine a man and a woman who are deeply, passionately, and completely in love. What will characterize their relationship? Constant giving and receiving, resulting in an ever deeper relationship and an ever intensifying gratitude — which will leave them both, daily, feeling ever more mellow, joyful, peaceful, mild, patient, chaste, and wanting to reach out and share with others what is so quickening in their own lives. Moreover, their love for each other will create around them, an ambience — a climate, an atmosphere of charity, joy, peace, patience, mildness and chastity. The movement of giving-and-receiving-i-gratitude between them will create a warm hearth where others will spontaneously come to seek warmth in a world which offers too little peace, patience, joy, and the like.



- Such a relationship can be a modest indicator of what happens in the Trinity — of how the Father and the Son generate the Spirit — and what results from this generation.
- The father constantly creates and gives life.
- The Son receives life from the Father and gives it back in gratitude.
- This then — as is true in all relationships wherein the gift is received lovingly — makes it possible for the Father to give even more to the Son.
- As this flow of life — this giving and receiving — goes on, gratitude intensifies, and an energy, a spirit — the Holy Spirit — is alive.
- This Spirit, since it is generated by gratitude, naturally is a Spirit of charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, faith, and chastity. It is also a spirit that is naturally incompatible with idolatry, adultery, violence, gossip, factionalism, jealousy, rage, and infidelity.

When we meditate on how the Holy Spirit is generated, we are under less illusion as to what it means to live in the Spirit. To believe that we are living in the Spirit when our lives are not permeated by, and radiating gratitude is to be dangerously deluded. We must be clear about this, lest, as the poet William Stafford puts it: “Following the wrong God home, we may both miss our star.”

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

proclaims Jesus to be “son” — to be “beloved,” to be the one who makes God “well pleased.”

Jesus in the water brings God joy. God passes that joy along in the person of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of divine pleasure. The “wise men” gave Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh at his birth [Matthew 2] — gifts that gave them joy to give. God gave Jesus the gift of his blessing, his pleasure, and his joy at the moment of Jesus’ baptism. God’s pleasure is the real divine baptismal gift. God’s pleasure and presence drifts down upon Jesus “like a dove.” Jesus’ ministry began at his baptism, and was “imprinted” by God’s pleasure.

Jesus’ “imprint” at his baptism was the voice of his Father declaring the divine pleasure — and the presence of the Holy Spirit, physically and palpably present. No wonder Jesus’ mission was marked by nothing less than joy. French theologian Teilhard de Chardin once said that “Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God.” But joy is as much the infallible sign of the pleasure — and not just the presence — of God. Jesus’ life was an active reflection of God’s pleasure that he received at his baptism. Experiencing God’s pleasure at his baptism empowered Jesus to live a life pleasing God. And a life spent experiencing God’s pleasure is always a life of joy.

No wonder that Jesus was always gathering together friends for dinner. No wonder Jesus was viewed askance by the “seriously religious” as an almost scandalous “party animal” — eating, drinking, talking and socializing with all sorts of questionable characters. Jesus felt God’s pleasure every day of his life, and the gift of that approval brought him unlimited joy. It was a joy that Jesus shared with all those who believed they were forever outside God’s pleasure — the tax collectors, the sinners, the sick, the poor, outcasts of all sorts, even Gentiles.

Jesus reached out to include all persons because he himself received and recognized God’s pleasure — God’s love — as a gift of grace. We do not receive God’s love and pleasure as any earned bonus. God’s pleasure in us — God’s acceptance of us, God’s grace towards us — is always and forever an unexpected, unattainable, unearned gift. God wants the divine pleasure in us to multiply into joy — into a life filled with the joy of salvation and thankfulness for the gift of grace.

You find in life what you look for. It’s time to trump our pet peeves with pet pleasures. Maybe we even should keep a joy inventory. For you are God’s “Beloved,” and you “bring him great pleasure.” You don’t reach out toward God’s pleasure — you reach out from God’s pleasure.

—taken from the writings of Leonard Sweet, which appear on the internet.

## EUCHARISTIC 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.**



## HOW TRUE:

Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it. —William Arthur Ward

## LIVING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT:

Few expressions so succinctly summarize what is asked of us as Christians as does the expression: “to live in the Spirit.” Too often, however, this phrase is used in a way that is too pious, too over-charged with charismatic fervor, or too theologically abstract to have much meaning for ordinary people. It may well summarize Christian life, but it can also be little more than a very vague platitude. What does it mean “to live in the Spirit?”

St. Paul, in attempting to specify this, is anything but piously deluded or theologically abstract.

loss of the ability to trust and believe. Compare that sort of living with living in the joy of a genuine and loving true friendship — one filled with commitment. After all, when you stop and think about it, commitment and faith go together. Each builds up the other.

I’ve heard the life-stories of lots of people — true-life stories that make fictional novels pale by comparison. Running through those accounts are stories involving deep, loving commitment, stories that can make you cry. Usually these stories involve treatment by others who have a lot of misunderstanding, who are downright abusive, nasty, and even disgusting. In their stories there are heroes and heroines who suffer from the hostility and misunderstanding of others, who suffer abuse, rejection and terrible pain at the hands of others, and who nevertheless maintain their commitment to “be there” and to love in the face of terrible, heartbreaking rejection. In the end we find in some of these stories (far too few of them in my opinion) the question is put to the one who is heroically committed: “Why did you put up with what you suffered? Where did you get this commitment?” And then comes the quiet, tear-choked reply: “Because I loved... and hoped back then that eventually people would realize just how much I loved.”

That’s why we have the Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of Confirmation. And that is also why Matrimony and Ordination are also sacraments. All of them are sacraments of commitment. They are holy moments, holy moments that fill us with the Spirit that anointed Jesus Christ who, in His commitment, saw the heavens open and heard a voice thundering: “You are my beloved son. On you my favor rests” [Luke 3:15-16,21-22].

Journey now back to your baptism. Open your ears once again. Hopefully you will hear the voice of God saying to you: “You are my beloved son. On you my favor rests. You are my beloved daughter, and I will love you no matter what.” It is because of God’s commitment to us that we in turn can give committed love to others.

Baptism calls us to live lives like that.

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

## BAPTISM IS MORE THAN A CEREMONY:

This weekend, we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. After our journey through Advent and Christmastide, the Baptism of Jesus marks our passing into what is known rather prosaically in the liturgical calendar as **Ordinary Time** — although if the truth be told it is anything but ordinary! As we begin Ordinary Time we are effectively marking the starting point of Christ’s three years of public ministry which he began with his Baptism in the River Jordan by John. In Luke’s Gospel, the Baptism of Jesus is immediately followed by the Temptation in the Desert and his rejection in the Synagogue at Nazareth — and only once these preliminaries are over does Jesus actually take up his ministry of healing and teaching.

As we reflect on the Baptism of Jesus we surely ought also to reflect on our own Baptism. After all, Baptism is the most fundamental of all the sacraments — it is the key to receiving all the others. Although most of us were far too young to even remember it, we should never forget to give thanks to God that our parents brought us to the waters of Baptism. It was probably the most important thing they could do for us.

Unlike us Jesus did not actually need to be Baptized — He had no sin that needed washing away; he already was a child of God, and so it was actually quite unnecessary. However, Jesus undergoes Baptism to show us how important it is and especially to give us an example we can follow. Jesus accepts Baptism at the hands of his cousin John to be the first of countless millions who accept the Gospel of Love and who wish to be initiated into new life with him.

This important occurrence on the banks of the River Jordan also allows God the Father to express his heavenly endorsement of Christ’s ministry in those famous words: “You are my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on you” [Luke 3:22]. These words show right from the start the very close involvement of the Father in Christ’s ministry — they mark the commencement of his public ministry and they demonstrate the Father’s approval of all that Christ was to achieve.

**THE NEW RETIREMENT:**

At Jesus' baptism, the heavens opened and the spirit descended. A voice proclaimed: "You are my beloved son" [Luke 3:15-16,21-22]. At Jesus' baptism his vocation was revealed to him. God made clear to Jesus how he should live and what was the purpose of his life.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if God could deal that clearly with us? Well....he does! Let me explain. As we are trying to decide what should we do with our lives, or who we should marry or whether we should make a change in our career, wouldn't it be wonderful if the skies would open and God would say: "Do this" or "Don't do that"? We know that God usually does not speak to us in this way. Nevertheless, even if the skies never open or the spirit never descends, we still believe that God is directing us. We are called to examine the patterns in our society. We believe that what we discover there is God's way of directing and guiding us. That is why today I want to direct your attention to a dramatic new pattern that is developing in our culture. I want to speak about this pattern from the perspective of faith, because I believe this development is a significant opportunity that God is offering to many of us.

Today our society is radically redefining the meaning of retirement. That's right. This homily addresses retirement from the perspective of faith. And before all of you in your teens and 20's and 40's tune me out, I want to promise that what I say applies to everyone in this church today. Because the development of retirement is changing the shape of all our lives. Today because of better nutrition and medicine Americans are living longer and better than any other people in the history of the world. Over the last fifty years the average American has gained ten years of productive life. That is an unheard-of advancement in the length and quality of living. It changes the shape of what all of us are moving towards and how we need to prepare for it. The old pattern used to be this: You grew up; you raised a family; you worked hard; you retired; you played a little golf and perhaps moved to Florida; and it was over. Today, people retiring in their 60's are facing 20 to 30 years of productive life. Now that is too long simply to play golf. — for some people!

So what are we to do with all that time? How can it be made productive? Much research is being done on this "new retirement." Already a few conclusions are coming into focus. I would like to highlight three qualities that research has shown typify people who are satisfied and happy in the new retirement. Those three qualities are: expansion, service and relationships.

Those who study retirement insist that those who are happy in these years are those who are willing to expand. Success in the new retirement involves developing new interests and abilities. Before retirement the task of life is to grow up and become productive. After retirement life's task is not to grow up but to grow out. When you are busy earning a living, your life by necessity has a narrow focus. After retirement there is more freedom to do things that are not tied to income. There is time to expand. And those who are happiest in retirement seem to be those who expand in a number of different areas and often in ways that are very different from what they used to do for a living. So, you have brain surgeons learning to play the trumpet, and history teachers studying astronomy and homemakers starting businesses. The ability to stretch oneself, to broaden oneself, to enlarge oneself is the first quality for those who live the new retirement well.

The second quality is service. Those who are happy in retirement are people who have found a way to give back. This orientation to service seems to be an essential component in assembling a new pattern of living. Spending some time volunteering in a hospital or teaching a child to read contributes to long-term satisfaction. Serving is the second quality of a happy new retirement.

The third quality is relationships. For those facing 20 to 30 years of retirement, nothing is more



His Mission to make love the motivation of life. When those of you who have children empty yourselves so your children can grow into the reflections of God He created them to be, you are continuing His Mission. When we strive to be the best at whatever it is that He calls us to do in our careers, we are continuing His Mission. When we say "No!" to sin, and "Yes" to care for all who are hurting, we are continuing His Mission. When we make time to be kind to those whom our society hates — the downtrodden, the socially unacceptable, the butt of jokes at school, at work, in the community — we are continuing His Mission. When we respond to the Grace to do something for someone else, we are continuing His Mission. When we realize with our lives that we are not the center of the universe — but that Jesus is the Center, and our center — we are continuing His Mission.

"You are my Beloved Son. With you I am well pleased" —this was the voice of the Father over the Son after Jesus was baptized by John. The Father was pleased that Jesus embraced His Mission. He is pleased when we continue Christ's Mission.

What a gift we have been given in Jesus Christ. Some people think that life is meaningless and without purpose. But we Christians know why we were created, and how we can live meaningful lives. We can make a difference in the world by uniting ourselves to the One who changed the world with His Life. We can continue the Mission of Jesus Christ.

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

**PET PEEVES AND PET PLEASURES:**

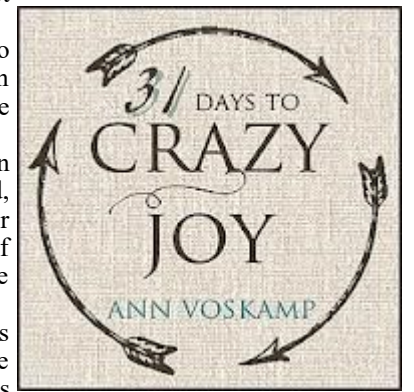
The weather is always a good source for small talk. In the dark and dreary days of January, "small talk" becomes even smaller — meaner and more morose. Whether it's chatting at the check-out stand with a cashier, or making conversation in the cramped quarters of a slow moving elevator, this time of year "weather talk" isn't likely to be upbeat — "I hate the snow!" "Don't you just love what the salt does to your shoes, your car, your clothes?" "Tornado warnings in January? Really!!" "It's dark when I go out in the morning and dark when I get home after work. I haven't seen daylight in weeks!" "Why does every parking spot come equipped with its own giant puddle?" Everyday grouches of everyday glitches. But they give our casual conversations and interactions a kind of "survivor" camaraderie.

Verbalizing all our gripes might bind us together, but it doesn't lift us up. We're still all stuck in the same dreary day. Why is it so easy to talk, tweet, or text all of our favorite "pet peeves" of the day, and not so easy to pay attention to and pass on those things that bring the gift of joy to a mundane moment in each day? We all have "pet peeves." How many of you have "pet joys?" We all gripe and grouse. How many of us compliment and congratulate? Where are our "pet graces" to go with our "pet gripes?"

Maybe it's time to "enlarge" our "small talk" and expand it to encompass and express joy and inspiration. Instead of just passing on the foibles of the weather and foulness of the world, why don't we celebrate and congratulate, bless and compliment in our small talk?

Life has now returned to its routine — the kids are back in school and their crazy schedules are demanding. It's dark and cold, and winter woefulness is everywhere. All the ads on TV are for weight loss programs and tax return help. Where is the joy in any of that? Yet there IS joy everywhere, everyday, in every occasion. We just need to pay attention, and then pass it along.

In Luke's Gospel [3:15-16,21-22], John the Baptist closes out his mission with a word that combines the promise of salvation and the Spirit with a warning about the judgment — the "fire" to come. It is a kind of "good news/bad news" scenario. Yet Jesus' inaugural moment — his baptism — is nothing but "good news." The heavens open up, the Holy Spirit descends with a physical force, and the voice of God





**CONTINUING THE MISSION:**

We end the Christmas Season and begin the Season of Ordinary Time with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord by John the Baptist. Why was Jesus baptized by John? Certainly, He was not a sinner who needed to repent like so many of the others whom John baptized. The Fourth Eucharistic Prayer reminds us that Jesus shared our human nature in all things but sin. John himself said that Jesus should be baptizing him, not he baptizing Jesus. So, why did Jesus go into the River Jordan and let John baptize him [Luke 3]?

Perhaps the question can be answered by asking: “Why did people respond to John’s invitation to be baptized?” They wanted the presence of God to be restored to the world, and they knew that first it had to be restored in them. They wanted evil to be defeated, and they knew that first they had to defeat evil within themselves. They wanted the Kingdom of God to begin, and they were baptized to proclaim this Kingdom with their lives.

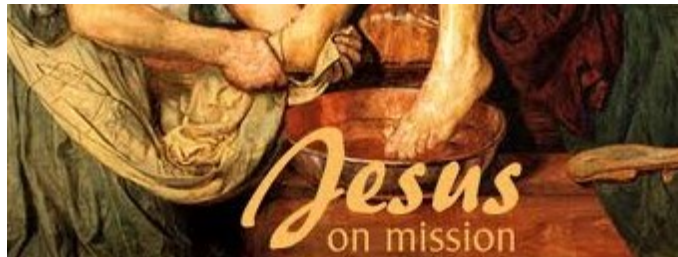
Jesus joined them in their desires for the Kingdom of God. He saw the pain that godlessness brought to humankind, and wanted to be united to all who sought God. He saw the results of sin in the world, and wanted to be united to all who would fight sin. He knew that the Kingdom of God was beginning and sought union with all were willing to make a commitment to the Kingdom.

And John pointed to Jesus and said: “Look, there is the Lamb of God” [John 1:29]. There is the one who will take the horrors of the world upon Himself, and die for God’s people.

When Jesus was baptized, He accepted his Mission — that was the whole reason why He became a man. He began His public ministry which would end in the destruction of sin and hate with obedience to the Father and love for His people. Jesus embraced His Mission, defeated the devil, established the Kingdom of God, and then called on each of us to continue His ministry — and in fact, more than that — to complete His Mission.

A famous story is told about the completion of Giacomo Puccini’s opera, *Turandot*. Puccini was one of the greatest composers of opera of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries — *La Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Madame Butterfly* are just a few of his most famous works. His final work was the opera, *Turandot*. He knew he was dying when he started writing *Turandot*, and he almost completed it, but he passed away before he finished the final act. Puccini had many students and associates who gathered around his deathbed. They made up their minds that they would complete *Turandot* as an expression of their esteem for the great composer. It didn’t happen all at once — it took a number of years — but finally they finished the task. The opera debuted at one of the most famous theaters in the world — *La Scala* in Milan. It was conducted by the former pupil of Puccini, Arturo Toscanini. The music was beautiful and the audience was spellbound. Then in the middle of the Third Act, after the great aria, *Nessun Dormo*, Toscanini laid down his baton, turned to the people, and announced: “It is at this point that the Master died.” You could have heard a pin drop. Then Toscanini looked at the audience and said: “But his disciples continued his work in his Spirit.” Toscanini turned back to the stage and completed the opera to the thunderous applause of all at *La Scala*.

We are called to continue the Mission of the Jesus Christ in His Spirit — His Holy Spirit. We are determined to complete the work of the Master. We do this through our vocations to the married life, to parenthood, to the priesthood, to religious life, or to the life of the committed Catholic single. When we love others, we are continuing His Mission, for He is the Tremendous Lover. When we develop and use the particular gifts He has given to each of us to make the world beautiful for others, we are continuing His Mission. When those of you who are married put your spouse before yourselves, you are continuing



important than friendship. Because loss through death is a clear reality in the latter years of life, living the new retirement with one spouse or one friend is often not enough. People need a network of relationships, a group of people with whom life can be shared and sorrows carried. Good and varied relationships are crucial to retirement.

Now everything we are talking about pertains to the average American. It is tragically true that there are people here today who will never reach retirement and others who might not be able to retire at the normal time because of financial reasons. But for most of us the pattern of our society indicates that we will have 20 to 30 years of retired life. To live that retirement well, we must be willing to enlarge ourselves, to serve, to build relationships.

So, here’s the point. If the new retirement is as we have described, why not begin today? Even if you are in your 20’s or 30’s and certainly if you are in your 40’s or 50’s, now is the time to think ahead. What new interests, what new abilities should I develop? How can I serve and begin to discern what kind of service might benefit me and others when retirement gives me more freedom? How can I build a network of relationships. How can I connect with people who have similar interests, people with whom I can share life?

We should not wait for the heavens to open and the Holy Spirit to come down to tell us what to do. God is speaking to us today in the patterns of our society. The shape of our life is changing and God is preparing us for what lies ahead. Now is the time to enlarge our thinking, to serve others, to develop relationships so that God’s gift of retirement will not be a burden to be endured, but a blessing to be lived.

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

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

**Monday:** Hebrews 1:1-6, Mark 1:14-20

**Tuesday:** Hebrews 2:5-12, Mark 1:21-28

**Wednesday:** Hebrews 2:14-18, Mark 1:29-39

**Thursday:** Hebrews 3:7-14, Mark 1:40-45

**Friday:** Hebrews 4:1-11, Mark 2:1-12

**Saturday:** Hebrews 4:12-16, Mark 2:13-17

**2<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time:** Isaiah 62: 1-5, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, John 2:1-11

**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 over the summer, as well as for next year’s 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 our Lectoring 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].**



**BAPTISM IS MORE THAN A CEREMONY:**

This weekend, we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. After our journey through Advent and Christmastide, the Baptism of Jesus marks our passing into what is known rather prosaically in the liturgical calendar as **Ordinary Time** — although if the truth be told it is anything but ordinary! As we begin Ordinary Time we are effectively marking the starting point of Christ's three years of public ministry which he began with his Baptism in the River Jordan by John. In Luke's Gospel, the Baptism of Jesus is immediately followed by the Temptation in the Desert and his rejection in the Synagogue at Nazareth — and only once these preliminaries are over does Jesus actually take up his ministry of healing and teaching.

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This important occurrence on the banks of the River Jordan also allows God the Father to express his heavenly endorsement of Christ's ministry in those famous words: "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favor rests on you" [Luke 3:22]. These words show right from the start the very close involvement of the Father in Christ's ministry — they mark the commencement of his public ministry and they demonstrate the Father's approval of all that Christ was to achieve.

So we all ought to spend a little time today — and every day — reflecting on the importance of our own Baptism, and reminding ourselves that through this wonderful sacrament our lives have been irrevocably linked to Christ. We are united to him by an invisible bond of love, and we are assured of his company as we journey through our life on this earth.

Our Baptism is also an assurance of our salvation and the guarantee of everlasting life. Through it, we receive the pledge of immortality which is God's greatest gift to us. By this, God assures us that he wants to share his life with us for all eternity. There could be nothing greater than this.

What may seem to many as a banal little ceremony on a rainy Sunday afternoon turns out to be one of the greatest things that could ever happen to us.

We must also keep at the forefront of our minds the fact that by our Baptism and Confirmation we are assigned a vitally important mission — that of handing on the Gospel to others. Now this mission might be something we do not feel very well qualified to carry out. But we should not fear it because, as with many things to do with our faith, this task is full of paradox.

When we share our faith with others, we do not end up with less faith — actually, we end up with more. The very act of sharing our faith means that it is in itself enriched — the more we share our faith with others, the more it grows and deepens in us, and the better we feel about it. We all need to take up the challenge — do what it is you are required to do as a result of your Baptism and spread your faith around a bit. You may well be surprised and indeed delighted at the consequences.

Especially during this time of the year, each of us is given a very special opportunity to not only



reflection on "life issues" — the unborn, as well as those nearing the end of their time on this earth. It is a cause that we should all support because society at large has undervalued the life of the child in the womb and treats the question of bringing children to birth as something that is a sort of lifestyle choice. In addition, many people struggle with the usefulness of life when age and health often dramatically change our life style.

It is the task of every Christian to stand up for the weak and the vulnerable — whether that be the unborn child, or the aged and the infirm. The forces of selfishness and secularism that are so prevalent in our Society quash the rights of so many, and as Christians, we are called to take a stand. And this is only one of many issues that demand our response as baptized members of the Body of Christ. This is not someone else's task — it is a calling to each of us.

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

**WHY DID JESUS GET BAPTIZED?**

If Jesus was God and without sin why did He need to be baptized and forgiven of sin? This certainly is a very good question. And there are several things to think about. First of all, it's vital to note that the baptism John the Baptist was offering is not the same as the Baptism we go through today. You see, John the Baptist — "Johnny B." to his friends — was calling folks to the baptismal rite of the Essene community — the Essenes were desert dwellers. Their baptismal rite was more of an "entrance rite" or ritual". It was not as much about the "forgiveness of sins" as much as it was about **coming into a community**.

Remember, Christ had not yet died upon the cross, so the **salvific** — big word for "saving" — action and **redemptive** — forgiving and restoring — work of the Crucifixion and Resurrection had not yet occurred. That being the case, Christ's remission of our sins through Baptism was not yet possible for the folks whom "Johnny B." was baptizing.

Incidentally, that is why our Christian Baptism has two parts to the rite...both the **coming into the community** AND the **remission of sin**.

Christ was not in need of Baptism — not at all. Jesus submitted Himself to Baptism as He left His parents and community and claimed God as His Father. God the Father, in turn, claimed Jesus as His Son. Read the words of St. Mark: "It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased. At once the Spirit drove him out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him." [Mark 1:9-13]. By voluntarily getting baptized, Jesus not only offered an example, but He **became and fulfilled all righteousness** [Matthew 3:15]. Also, because He completely emptied Himself and "became like us in all things but sin", the baptism was a manifestation — public way of making known — of His humanity [see Philippians 2:7].

In Jesus' time, the community that claimed you and that you claimed was everything — it had to do with your importance, prominence, occupation, upbringing, vocation, stature, reputation, safety, financial security, lineage, marriage — everything. To leave your community, like Jesus did, and claim a new "community" with God as Father is a huge statement. It wasn't, however, that Jesus didn't love His family, or that He was leaving them behind — quite the contrary — by fulfilling His Divine Sonship, He was raising the dignity of His own family — especially His Mother Mary — to all new "heights" so to speak.

Thank God for Baptism — ours and his.

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

