

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer for Peace & Reconciliation ~

Oh God, our creator and giver of life,
you sent your Son, the Prince of Peace,
to redeem us and teach us the way of love.
Listen to the supplications of your suffering people —
those enduring the death of their loved ones
or the loss of property.;
those who fear for their lives,
or who have been displaced
and are facing hunger and scarcity.

Through the power of your grace,
we ask you, Lord,
to drive out from their midst
any form of hatred with your healing love.
Bring about justice
through the way of charity.
Where there is bitterness,
teach us forgiveness and reconciliation.
Put in our hearts
the love for truth,
so that your justice can prevail.

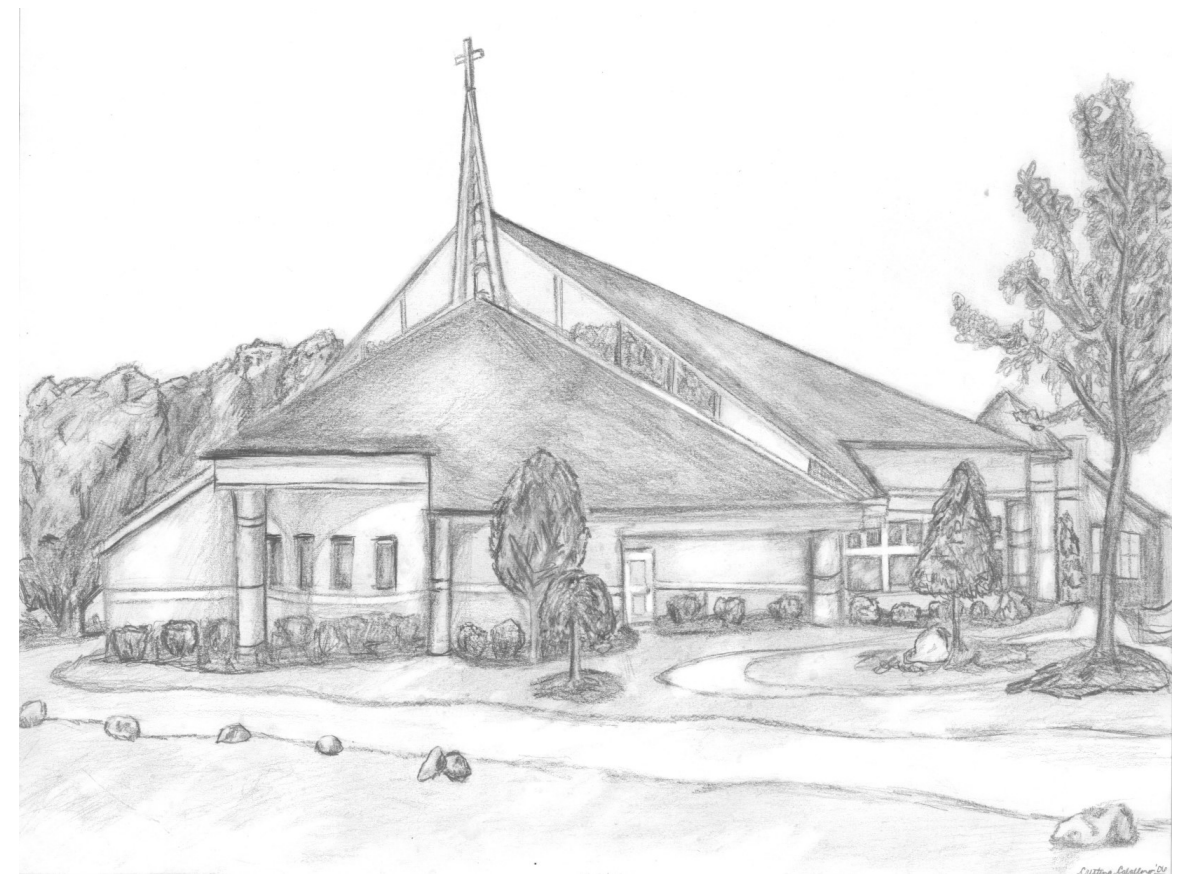
Above all, Father,
touch the hearts of our political leaders
to work toward understanding and unity
among all peoples of the world.

May you bless us all
with lasting peace and fraternal understanding,
where in your love,
we will live in unity,
peace,
and liberty
as brothers and sisters.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
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.

TODAY'S FEAST:

The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus was first observed in the Eastern Church — it was called the Feast of “The Encounter.” In the sixth century, it began to be observed in the West — in Rome with a more penitential character, and in France with solemn blessings and processions of candles — popularly known as “Candlemas Day”. The Presentation of the Lord concludes the celebration of the Nativity [Christmas Season] — 40 days after the Lord’s birth — and with the offerings of the Virgin Mother and the prophecy of Simeon, the events now point toward Easter.

Until 1969, the ancient feast of the Presentation of Jesus was known in the West as the feast of the Purification of Our Lady. The rite of purification of women following childbirth is very ancient in the Law of Moses. Because in childbirth, blood — which was regarded as sacred life in ancient days — was spilled, the need for purification became required.

Popular piety is sensitive to the providential and mysterious event that is the conception and birth of new life. Christian mothers can easily identify with the maternity of Our Lady, notwithstanding the notable differences in the Virgin’s unique conception and birth. These too are mothers in God’s plan and are about to give — or have given — birth to members of the Church. And, thus as with Mary, the Church has blessings for women both before and after birth — blessings which probably most mothers know little about. It is a highly desirable thing for mothers and married couples to ask for these blessings so that pregnancy can be brought to term without difficulty [blessing before birth], and to give thanks to God for the gift of a child [blessing after birth].

The presentation of Jesus at the time of his birth is another “epiphany” celebration insofar as the Christ Child is revealed as the Messiah through the canticle and words of Simeon and the testimony of Anna, the prophetess. Christ is the light of the nations — hence the blessing and procession of candles on this day.

FIRST RECONCILIATION:

This coming week, many of our second grade children will be receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time. This is a moment of great grace for them and for each of us. To meet Jesus in his loving embrace of mercy and forgiveness is an important part of our journey to God, our Father. Let us pray for our second graders: **James Fowler, Danny Rogozinski, Giuliana Savage, Marie-Eve Semaan, Sammy Sherman** and all our second grade children during this special time in their lives. And let us also pray that we will all grow into a deeper appreciation of the blessings of this special sacrament.

THE CHAPEL INDOOR PICNIC IS RETURNING:

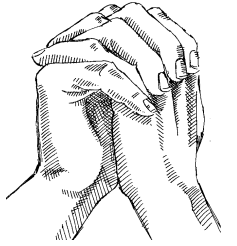
Put this date aside; mark your calendars! Sunday, March 2nd is the date for the return of our annual indoor Chapel picnic. Our indoor picnic has not been held since COVID, so we are looking forward to renewing this community building activity. What better way to spend a winter day — and the Sunday before Lent starts — than by having an **indoor picnic in the middle of winter — a great idea.** So here it comes once again. It will be a great event for the entire family. The picnic will be held **in the Commons from 11:00 AM – 1:15 PM.** **Family Mass takes place at 10:00 AM** and the picnic begins right after Mass — what a wonderful way to continue our celebration of community. **In a few weeks, families will be asked to sign up in the vestibule of the chapel, to bring your favorite side dish or desert if you can.**

**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 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.
- For Denise George, who is in rehab following a stroke.
- For a woman who has been diagnosed with thyroid cancer.
- For Lewis Lanza [‘57], brother of Arnold [‘53], and Joseph [‘58] Lanza, who is critically ill.

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Brother Edward Luther, C.S.C.
- For Thomas Ashley, Jr., son of Tom Ashley [‘60]
- For Mary Ann Fontana, wife of Carl [‘62].
- For Gussie Johnson
- For Brother Edward Libbers, C.S.C.
- For Victor Sopko
- For Brian Verdi, brother of Gilmour Parent, Kathleen Impullitti, brother-in-law of Nick Impullitti [‘01], uncle of Joey [‘34], Jackson [‘36], and Quinn [‘39] Impullitti.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT:

A little boy is telling his Grandma how everything is going wrong — school, family problems, severe health problems, etc. Meanwhile, Grandma is baking a cake. She asks her grandson if he would like a snack, which, of course, he does. “Here, have some cooking oil.” “Yuck” says the boy.

“How about a couple raw eggs?” “Gross, Grandma!” “Would you like some flour then? Or maybe baking soda?” “Grandma, those are all yucky!”

To which Grandma replies: “Yes, all those things seem bad all by themselves. But when they are put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake! God works the same way. Many times we wonder why he would let us go through such bad and difficult times. But God knows that when He puts these things all in His order, they always work for good! We just have to trust Him and, eventually, they will all make something wonderful!”



SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — FEBRUARY 15th:

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:

A collection box is located just inside the center door when you enter the chapel. Please place your offering in the collection box. 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 [1/25/25] _____ \$ 135.00
Total Offerings: Sunday [1/26/25] _____ \$ 300.00

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 plane crash in Washington, D.C., and for their families.
- For all those exposed to the extreme cold
- For the victims of the wild fires in California
- 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 — WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, February 12th 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: Love in the Writings of St. John

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, February 2: Presentation of Jesus	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, February 3:	NO MASS
Tuesday, February 4:	NO MASS
Wednesday, February 5 St. Agatha:	1:15 PM
Thursday, February 6: St. Paul Miki	NO MASS
Friday, February 7:	NO MASS
Saturday, February 8: 5th Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, February 9: 5th Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream

FAITH EDUCATION — SCHEDULE:

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 February are the 2nd, the 9th and the 23rd.**



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 understanding.



REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:

The Christmas decorations have long since been put away and the commercial world has already peaked for Valentine's day. Nevertheless, you may be surprised to know that until very recently, the Feast of the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple was the Church's formal closing of the Christmas season. Moreover, the story of Mary and Joseph bringing their baby to the temple in accordance with the law [Luke 2:22-40] is itself the climax and conclusion of St. Luke's entire Christmas story as Simeon proclaims Jesus "a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of His people, Israel". There is a marvelous unity and inner-connectedness here — a challenge and call for us "to be and to do".

The Christmas story began with an elderly couple — Zachary and Elizabeth — in the Jerusalem temple dealing with the fruit of a miraculous pregnancy, and concludes with another elderly pair Simeon and Anna — also in the temple at Jerusalem at the presentation to God of the fruit of yet another miraculous pregnancy. These opening and closing verses serve as bookends for the Nativity story — a story that is both familiar and of such depth that it never grows old. Its verses have given us the songs that have been a part of the Church's daily liturgy from ancient times.

First, there is Mary's *Magnificat* on her visit to Elizabeth. This prayer is always said as part of Evening Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours. Then, there is Zachariah's hymn of praise — *Benedictus*. This is the prayer that Zachariah said when he received back his gift of speech on the occasion of the circumcision of John the Baptist. This prayer is part of Morning Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours. Next is the song of the angels in Bethlehem — *Gloria* — which is part of the Mass on Sundays and feast days. Finally, there is Simeon's hymn of good-bye to God — *Nunc Dimittis* — forever a part of Night Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours. Notable as they are, these are just the most obvious uses of the richness of Luke's gospel — which is filled with Old Testament references and allusions.

The infancy narratives of the gospels are more than just a kind of biography of Jesus' early life. As the late scripture scholar, Fr. Raymond Brown, reminds us, they are literally gospels in miniature. The plot line is simple — the good news of God's salvation is proclaimed; it is accepted by some who worship Jesus; and it is opposed, often violently, by others who try to destroy it. But in the end, God triumphs.

As the early Church reflected on its own experience, it saw exactly that pattern — proclamation followed by a two-fold response — belief and rejection. It saw the same pattern in Jesus' earthly ministry — proclamation of the good news of God's salvation followed by acceptance and belief by some, and opposition and crucifixion by others. But, then, God triumphs — raising Jesus to new life.

Matthew and Luke construct their infancy narratives to show that the same pattern can be found there. The birth of the Savior is proclaimed by the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem; it is accepted by them and by the Magi, but rejected by Herod — who slaughters the innocents. But God triumphs by leading Jesus out of Herod's grasp. And in Luke's gospel, Simeon both proclaims God's salvation and predicts the two-fold response — the "fall and rise of many in Israel". The sword that he says will pierce Mary's being is not a sword of slaughter — as was the case with Herod. Rather it is a sword of discrimination, challenging everyone — Mary included — to choose for Jesus. This need to choose is highlighted later in Jesus' life when a person in the crowd shouts to Jesus: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that

**THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S GRACE:**

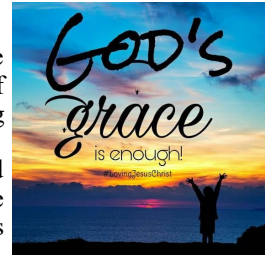
We all struggle in our sinfulness. We find our temptations and our sins to be embarrassing, and we rarely admit them. Even when we are shown evidence of our wrongdoing, our guilt often becomes an obstacle to our positive life-changing response. It is part of the human condition that all of us face.

Yet, the reality is that God continues to reach out to us with his grace and support. But rarely do we ask for that grace when we are being tempted. We are much better about doing this after we have fallen. God's grace works within us whenever we ask.

Father Moreau understood this. He writes: "God is faithful; God will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength."

St. Paul is a great example of this. He asked God to remove temptations from his life. But God reminded him that the grace that He offers is more than enough to deal with his weaknesses. And God's promise to us is the same.

God wants to work with us as we go throughout our day. But he will not force himself upon us. It is only when we are humble enough to admit our weaknesses — to take ownership of our choices — and to ask God for his grace, that we discover that inner strength to deal with the moment of temptation in our lives.

**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. 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 to receive a booklet.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: Hebrews 11:32-40, Mark 5:1-20

Tuesday: Hebrews 12:1-4, Mark 5:21-43

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Luke 9:23-26

Thursday: Galatians 2:19-20, Matthew 28:16-20

Friday: Hebrews 13:1-8, Mark 6:14-29

Saturday: Hebrews 13:15-17, 20-21; Mark 6:30-34

5th Week in Ordinary Time: Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Luke 5:1-11

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].



WAITING FOR THE LORD:

The evangelist Luke often pairs the experiences of both men and women in telling the story of Jesus: Mary and Joseph; Elizabeth and Zechariah, the parents of John the Baptist; and the woman finding the lost coin and the shepherd finding the lost sheep. Following this pattern, Luke's Gospel [2:22-40] presents both Anna and Simeon as Jewish witnesses to Jesus as the Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, the elderly Simeon — a devout and righteous man — goes to the Temple in Jerusalem the very day that Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the Temple to present him to the Lord. Assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah, Simeon takes Jesus in his arms and prays that he is now ready to die because “my eyes have seen” the One who brings salvation.

Simeon represents all who know something of the fulfilling nature of God's saving grace — who feel already blessed by the Spirit in this life. A husband who loves his wife as much today as when they got married 40 years ago is grateful for a lifetime of blessings. A single woman with a fulfilling career believes her life journey has been guided and blessed by God. A retired executive no longer feels a need to impress people and has learned to enjoy the simple ways the Spirit blesses his everyday life. Perhaps we could all be more attentive to the fulfilling experience of grace in our own lives — to the ways God has already bestowed abundant blessings on us.

In contrast to Simeon, Anna, an 84 year old widow, who lost her husband after only seven years of marriage, is not just visiting the Temple, but is there all the time fasting and praying. She does not see Jesus so much as the fulfillment of prophecies, but as the one who inaugurates a new era bright with promise for the future. Anna is “a prophetess” — ready to speak about the child Jesus to “all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.”

Anna represents a type of spirituality that is future oriented — more attuned to possibilities than to accomplishments, more aware of divine promises than divine epiphanies. A couple in marriage counseling began to make progress when they were able to envision the possibility of a happier life together. A peace activist continues to protest against violence and war, energized by his faith conviction that the good will finally prevail over all the evil forces. A man battling his addictive tendencies with little success refuses to give up because he believes in the eventual triumph of divine grace. A grandmother, who has had to carry many heavy crosses throughout her life, tells her family that her faith in Christ's promises has kept her going. We all do well to reflect on ways that God's promises of a better future have sustained us in difficult times.

—edited from the writings of Father Jim Bacik which appear on the

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

We are resuming our need for Servers and Lectors. Ever since COVID, people seem to not have the same interest and/or desire. But these 2 ministers are so grace-filled — both from God and personally. **Any student who is in the 3rd [and up] grade is invited to become an Altar Server; any student who is in the 5th [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 for more information at: [440-473-3560].**

nursed you” [Luke 11:27]. Jesus' response is to stress that biology — physical — motherhood is not the basis for Mary's greatness. Rather “blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it”. In the case of Mary, twice Luke mentions that Mary “kept all these things in her heart” [Luke 2:19 and 2:51].

Every encounter with the Gospel is a challenge and a call for a decision. This story is no exception. It is our privilege and our duty as Christians to proclaim God's salvation — by deed and word — being mindful of the response we will evoke, and remembering that the crib of Bethlehem lies in the shadow of the cross at Calvary.

—taken from the writings of Robert Heaney which appear on the internet.

FEAST OF SAINT BLAISE – MONDAY, FEB. 3rd:

Blessings and prayers are reminders of God's caring presence among us. Blessing the throats of the faithful with crossed candles and prayer is a tradition celebrated since the sixteenth century on **February 3rd**, the feast of Saint Blaise, a fourth century bishop of Sebaste [modern Armenia]. Many of us know very little about the reason why the Church blesses throats on this day. Here is the story which lies behind the blessing. Blaise lived in the fourth century. A philosopher and physician, St. Blaise turned his back on the worldly pleasures and devoted his life to God as a physician of souls. His virtues and preaching drew people from everywhere.

This bothered Agricolaus the Governor of Cappadocia, which is today Turkey and Iraq. The Roman governor seized Blaise and ordered his incarceration. On his way to prison, Blaise was stopped by a distraught mother who pleaded for him to help her daughter who was dying of a throat disease. Blaise, touched by her sorrow and faith, prayed for the girl, and through these intercessory prayers the little girl was healed. Other reports say he healed a young boy choking on a fish bone.

St. Blaise is often depicted with two candles, used by priests on this day to bless throats. There are a plethora of stories about the many instances in which people have been cured of throat diseases through the intercession of St. Blaise. He was beheaded by the heathens in 316 and his remains are buried in the church bearing his name in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Unfortunately, the church was damaged by the Serbs in 1993 and is presently being restored.

If you would like to have your throat blessed, please call Father John in the Campus Ministry Office.

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.

2025

THE FLOW OF LIFE:

A human life is a single statement. This does not seem to be the case because we measure our lives episodically in terms of events, particular circumstances, and experiences. But every incident is but a partial rendering of the total life. Some events are marked by dramatic intervals, by pain or joy — which may cause us to mark the place and to memorialize it for all our days. They are watershed moments.

—Howard Thurman

BEING PIERCED BY THE SWORD:

A few years before his death, the late Scripture scholar, Raymond Brown, wrote a classic book entitled: *The Birth of the Messiah*. In it, one will quickly not that Brown spends a lot of time separating the theology Luke — what Luke is actually trying to convey by narrating an event — from the many pious, but often false ways people have treated that incident throughout the centuries.

Like all serious students of Scripture, Brown first demonstrates how Luke has combined two different Jewish practices into one happening. First, Torah regulations demanded every first born male be offered to the Lord, and then bought back through sacrificial offering. Second, after each birth, Jewish women were expected to go through a period purification before they could once again return to the formal practice of their faith. Though almost always fulfilled separately, the evangelist has Joseph and Mary carry out both these obligations in one action.

The author of the Book of Hebrews [2:14-18] looks at Jesus' presentation and Mary's purification as a sign that Jesus actually identified with those he was sent to save from death — "He had to become like his brothers and sisters in every way, that he might expiate the sins of the people." In the writer's theology, if Jesus wasn't human, he couldn't save humans. And nothing is more human than having to observe human laws.

It's significant that Luke mentions nothing about Joseph redeeming Jesus with the usual five shekel offering. The omission seems to be a way of saying this is one case in which the child remains God's property — a point Luke will develop throughout his gospel.

I remember as a child often looking at the Immaculate Heart of Mary picture that my grandma had hanging in her bedroom. The sword through Mary's heart especially attracted my attention. Much later I learned this particular image originated in Simeon's words to her during her purification ritual — "Behold, this child destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted — and you yourself a sword will pierce — so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" [Luke 2:22-40].

Basing their insights on this heart-piercing sword, many old-time commentators and homilists developed the idea that Mary — like her son — was destined to suffer for the salvation of the world. Yet, as Brown insists, it doesn't seem to be the image Luke is trying to convey to his readers. Luke seems more interested in employing the sword as a symbol of judgment than as a metaphor for pain or suffering. The evangelist is convinced that Jesus' teachings and life-style will force people to make decisions. Do follow we him or reject him? Do we imitate his dying and rising or look elsewhere for fulfillment in our lives? Luke presumes this sword of discernment cuts through everyone's heart, and he wants to make certain readers are on the right side of the cut.

The concept of having to choose God's way or the highway is a frequent biblical concept. For instance, the prophet Malachi presumes his unknown messenger of the Lord is an agent of judgment — "He is like the refiner's fire, or like the fuller's lye. He will sit refining and purifying silver, and will purify the sons of Levi" [Malachi 3:1-4]. The true faith is expected to rise to the surface.

In Luke's case, Jesus will demand that Israelites choose between his reform and their "old time religion" — just as Mary will have to one day decide between remaining just a physical family relative of Jesus, or joining new family of faith.

Such sword heart-piercing is an essential part of being other Christs — and Jesus is the swordsman!

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



we recognize it precisely as gift, as something undeserved. And to do that requires sacrifice — a willingness to give some, or the entire gift back to its giver.

We see this as the dynamic underlying the ritual of ancient sacrifice. For example, a farmer would harvest a crop. But before he or his family would eat even a mouthful of it, the farmer would take some of it — the "first-fruits" — and offer it back to God in the form of a sacrifice — usually by burning it so that the smoke rising up to the heavens would take some of the crop back to God, whom the farmer saw as the real giver of that crop. After sacrificing some of it in this way, the farmer and his family could now enjoy the rest of it without guilt, because by trying to give it back to its author, they had made themselves more aware that it was a gift. They can now enjoy it without guilt, precisely because, through sacrifice, they have acknowledged it as gift.

That's the inner essence of all sacrifice — whether the sacrificing of a career for the sake of our children, or Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Sacrifice recognizes gift as gift. Like Abraham, it tries to give the gift back to the giver, but the giver stops the sacrifice and gives it back in even a deeper way.

We would enjoy our lives considerably more if we understood that.

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

ARE YOU A FAITH-FILLED PERSON?

We desire to be closer to God, but there are constant reminders of our humanity. We are bound to have uncertainties, but there is no need for us to fumble about in the dark, drowning in a sea of uncertainty and confusion. The light of God's word dwells within us through the Holy Spirit and His Son Jesus Christ. It's not that we don't trust in the capability of our God, but we understand all too well our own human frailty. God is waiting for us, waiting for us to allow a continual flow of His Spirit within us, to allow His Spirit to create our hearts anew.

Each of us is saved through the blood of Jesus Christ; each of us is given access to the presence of God, but it all begins with our act of repentance — the opening of our heart. We need to understand that we are in the process of being changed. The more we seek God's light and immerse ourselves in His presence, the more we will be changed, and the closer we will step walk toward Him. God will teach us His ways day by day.

O God, I seek your presence. I have sinned and have fallen short of your expectations. Thank you for loving me and for sending me your son Jesus Christ. Fill me with your treasures and wisdom as I immerse myself in your presence. Thank you for the gift of your redemptive love. Fill me with your light. Amen.

HEALING OUR HEARTS THROUGH FORGIVENESS:

How can we forgive those who do not want to be forgiven? Our deepest desire is that the forgiveness we offer will be received. This mutuality between giving and receiving is what creates peace and harmony. But if our condition for giving forgiveness is that it will be received, we seldom will forgive! Forgiving the other is first and foremost an inner movement. It is an act that removes anger, bitterness, and the desire for revenge from our hearts and helps us to reclaim our human dignity. We cannot force those we want to forgive into accepting our forgiveness. They might not be able or willing do so. They may not even know or feel that they have wounded us. The only people we can really change are ourselves. Forgiving others is first and foremost healing our own hearts.



THE ANATOMY OF SACRIFICE:

What do we mean when we say that we “make a sacrifice?” — “I have sacrificed my career for my children!” “I sacrifice a lot for my job!” Love demands that we make many sacrifices. Sometimes we must sacrifice life itself for the sake of integrity. Christ sacrificed himself for our sins. The Eucharist is a sacrifice! From what is common in all these expressions, we can extract Webster’s definition of a sacrifice — “the surrender of something of value for the sake of something else.”

This is a good definition, but it contains more than first meets the eye, as is evident when we look at the concept of sacrifice in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Take, for example, the famous story where Abraham is asked to sacrifice his son, Isaac [see Genesis 22]. What is ultimately behind God’s invitation to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on an altar?

These are the outer elements of the story: Abraham has longed for a son for many years. Finally, after the situation was humanly hopeless, Sarah conceives and he is given a son — Isaac — who is described as Abraham’s “only one”, his “precious one.” But then God invites Abraham to take Isaac and offer him in sacrifice. Abraham, with a heavy heart, agrees to the request and sets off with Isaac. He carries the wood, fire, and a knife — all the while having to answer his son’s curiosity about why they were not bringing a victim for the sacrifice.

When they arrive at the place of sacrifice, Abraham gathers the wood, lights the fire, binds Isaac, and then raises the knife to kill him. But God intervenes, stops the sacrifice, and gives Abraham a ram instead to offer. The story ends with Abraham walking back to his own land together with Isaac.

What is the deep lesson inside this story? At one level, the lesson is that God does not want human sacrifice.

But there is a deeper, more intimate, inner lesson that teaches us something about the innate need inside of us to offer sacrifice. Simply put, the lesson is this — in order for something to be received as a gift, it must be received twice.

What is implied here? A gift, by definition, is something that is not deserved, but given freely. What is our first impulse when we are given a gift? Our instinctual response is: “I can’t take this! I don’t deserve this!” In essence, that gesture — that healthy instinctual response — is an attempt to give the gift back to its giver. But, of course, the giver refuses to take the gift back, and re-gives it to us with the assurance: “But I want you to have this!” when we receive it the second time, it is now more properly ours, because by trying to give it back, we healthily recognized that it was a gift — unmerited and undeserved.

That is the exact set of dynamics within the story of Abraham offering to sacrifice Isaac. Isaac comes to him as the greatest, most-undeserved, gift of his life. His willingness to sacrifice Isaac parallels the instinctual gesture — “I don’t deserve this! I cannot accept this!”. Abraham offers the gift back to its giver. But the giver — Love itself — stops the gesture and gives the gift the second time. Now Abraham can receive Isaac without guilt as gift. When they are walking back home, Isaac is now Abraham’s son in a way that he never was before. Abraham had to receive the gift twice by sacrificing it the first time.

That is the essence of sacrifice. To properly receive anything — including life itself — requires that

**OUR PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE:**

Normally the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus is overlooked by most Catholics because it generally occurs on a weekday. Traditionally this feast marks the end of the Christmas season, and many Churches — particularly those in Europe — keep the crib up until this day. Forty days after the birth of Jesus it was traditional by Jewish Law to present the newborn child in the Temple. Mary and Joseph observed this tradition.

The Presentation of Jesus is unique to Luke’s Gospel [2:22-40]. Matthew has the coming of the Three Wise Men and the Flight into Egypt, while Luke goes from the Birth of Jesus to the Presentation in the Temple. We call the visit of the Three Wise Men, the Epiphany — the manifestation to the Gentiles; but we could just as easily call the Feast of the Presentation an Epiphany because Jesus also makes himself manifest. His presentation in the Temple manifests him to Simeon and Anna — faithful members of the People of Israel — but through them also to the Gentiles, for as Simeon specifically acknowledges in his prophesy, Jesus is “the light to the Gentiles”.

There are many different layers to this wonderful feast. Besides it being a sort of “second Epiphany”, there is, for instance, the whole symbolism of the Temple. The first “act” of the Child Jesus is to come to the Temple. The Temple is the place of God, and at the heart of the Temple is the Holy of Holies — the living presence of God among his people.

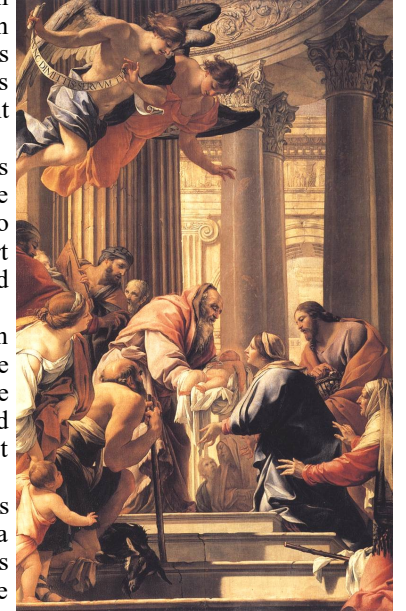
What we celebrate today is an extraordinary meeting of God with God. The Temple — his dwelling place on Earth — is visited by the Holy One himself. Jesus’ first action is to come to the privileged place of encounter between God and Man. And of course where does God meet us most wonderfully of all but in the very person of Jesus Christ — true God and true man.

Jesus does not actually enter the Holy of Holies — but he does not need to, for his coming to the Temple precincts is in itself a wonderfully symbolic act. Jesus shows himself there and is recognized by Simeon and Anna. On seeing the Christ observe the prescriptions of the Judaic law, Simeon makes that great prophecy which is at the same time a most wonderful prayer — “my eyes have seen your salvation.”

Another layer to this feast is the meeting between the young and the old. The old have been faithful and persevered in their faith, and are, late in life, rewarded and their hope is fulfilled. In their old age, they meet the eternally youthful Son of God. At a time when we hear so much justification of euthanasia — and when it is presumed that a person of advanced years is worthless unless they are fulfilling some useful function — it is heartening to see the old so much valued in the pages of the scriptures. Human life is sacred, and it is not what we do, but who we are, that gives us value.

In their old age, Simeon and Anna may not have been able to “do” much, but they can pray, and despite their failing eyesight they see what no one else can see. The priests certainly don’t come running to welcome Christ into his own Temple — but these weak and frail elderly people who have over many years devoted themselves to the service of God recognize Christ even though he is but a tiny baby.

This Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is commonly called “Candlemas” — a day when the Church blesses candles that it will use throughout the coming year. One might wonder what the



connection is with the candles.

The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus is very old; it was celebrated in the East as early as the fourth century. It came to be celebrated in Rome at the end of the seventh century and spread through the Western Church from there. From the very beginning, a procession with candles was always part of the celebration. Candles are carried in the procession because the feast centers around Christ the light. As Simeon says in his prophecy, Christ is “a light to enlighten the Gentiles.” The blessing of candles is a sort of extended meditation on those beautiful words.

The Church has used candles throughout its history to symbolize Christ, the Light of the World. As the candle burns and gives light, so it consumes itself — just as Christ gave his life as a sacrifice on the Cross for the salvation of all.

And here we have the shadow of the Cross. The parents of Jesus make the ritual sacrificial offering on behalf of the Christ Child, but this is a foreshadowing of the once-and-for-all sacrifice he is going to make on the hill of Calvary that will bring an end to the need for the Temple.

The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus is also the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life. The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus is also regarded as a very special celebration by Religious priests, brothers and sisters throughout the world. On this feast their religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are recognized as a real of presentation of their whole lives to God in imitation of Christ’s offering of his life for our salvation. Their witness to the eternal values and their imitation of Christ are a real light for the world of today.

Men and women in the various Religious Orders take Simeon and Anna as models for their life. Like them, consecrated religious commit themselves to a life of prayer and the service of God and the poor, giving witness to the Good News by the testimony of their lives.

This is a feast of light. Christ is the true light of the world, and we — his followers — ought to be bringing his light into the many dark corners we find around us today. Despite the many excellent values promoted by present day society, there are also movements that are plain contrary to the teachings of Christ. Our task is to bring light to these dark corners — to proclaim Christ’s Gospel of justice, love, and peace.

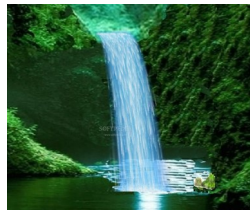
Particularly relevant is that we preach the Gospel of Life. We live in a society where abortion is regarded as quite acceptable, where euthanasia is increasingly finding a place, where war is still seen as a valid solution to differences, where the lives of the poorest people of the world are not regarded as being of the same worth as our own lives.

Our society needs Christ. Our society needs to experience salvation. And it is to our own society that we need to be agents of its redemption.

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

THE WATERFALL:

Have you ever gone hiking along a trail looking for a waterfall? These are beautiful sights. A trickling peaceful waterfall, tumbling down slippery rocks, or one that thunders and is powerful and majestic; a waterfall that splashes in a swift current below over time-worn boulders to meet up downstream with yet another river. Awesome. Have you ever seen the source of any of the waterfalls? It’s called the “Top-of-the-Waterfall.” It is a most glorious sight. We aren’t always lucky enough to see the “Top-of-the-Waterfall,” but we always know that there has to be a source, even though we can’t see it. Though we cannot actually see God — our source — we know that if we see Jesus, then we have seen the God of all life [see John 14:9].



infinitely more important to God than our children are important to us.

This feast reminds us that God is not removed from us in His very being. Jesus, is in effect, one of us. He knows; He cares; He has experienced, and He loves.

The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus should lead us to offer this prayer: “Jesus, you are one of us, yet you are infinite God. Heal our weakness and our pain. Give us the joy of your peace. Help us to rely on your power. Fill us with your love. You are not just any child presented in the Temple — You are the Son of God; You bear the power of God; You are also one of us. Care for us who share the burden of life, and who unite our joys and suffering to your life. You are the Intercessor “par excellence”. You are a human being, and you are the Son of God. Help us to rely on your love and presence in our lives and before the throne of your Father. Amen.”

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

PRESENT YOURSELF AS A LIVING SACRIFICE:

The Presentation of the Lord is not just about something and somebody else in the past — in fact, the Feast of the Presentation is a feast about all of us and our communities’ abilities to be dedicated to God and one another. To be dedicated or consecrated to someone requires a devotion — a single-mindedness and a loyalty. We can be dedicated to people, things, and activities. When we are dedicated to God, this devotion and loyalty is to our very call and invitation to be people who are loving and merciful. Recall what Paul writes to the Church at Rome: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. This is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect. Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned” [Romans 12:1-3].

The Presentation of Jesus recalls our own presentation — our own self offering to God. We need to ask ourselves: “How am I living this vocation — this call — in a world that so desperately needs to see Jesus?” When Joseph and Mary presented Jesus in the temple, an old man by the name of Simeon was waiting and praying for the coming of the Messiah. When he saw Jesus, he took him in his arms and blessed God, saying: “Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples — a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel” [Luke 2:29-32]. Each of us needs to make our own presentation to God — committed to the Church and to God’s people — offering hope and light to generations who long for insight and revelation, and an experience of a good, healing future. Our witness can be as truthful and inspiring to others as Jesus’ presentation was for Simeon and Anna.

Present yourself to the Lord each and every day of your life.

—adapted from a blog written by Jocelyn Sideco which appeared on the internet.

WELL SAID:

It is hard to keep money matters in perspective — wealth makes us so many promises. But only you are faithful, Lord. You are perfect in wisdom and goodness, and you would never deceive me. I accept your warning, Lord. Love of money can block the action of your grace. Have mercy on me and every-one tempted by this distraction from you. Jesus, I trust in you.

JESUS, YOU ARE ONE OF US:

In celebrating the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, we return to the Christmas season, focusing in on the person of the Lord. Jesus is seen as a child, presented to the priests according to the Law of Moses. You may remember that the final plague upon the Egyptians to force them to let the children of Israel go was the killing of the first born. The Angel of Death came into Egypt, but passed over the children of Israel [see Exodus 12]. Since the first born of the children of Israel were spared the plague, they were seen as belonging to the Lord [see Exodus 13]. By Jesus' day, parents whose first child was a boy would go to the Temple with the appropriate offering to present their child to the Lord. That is what Mary and Joseph were doing in Temple. This would be an occasion for celebration. Every child is loved and celebrated, but the first child transforms the couple — husband and wife — into a family.

The child who is presented in Luke's gospel [2:22-40] is more than the joy of his parents — He is the joy of the world, and so the presentation of this child in the temple is a great source of rejoicing for all. The prophet Malachi [3:1-4] sets the scene for this visit. While Malachi, strictly speaking, is making a reference to John the Baptist in this prophecy, it Anna and Simeon who are the precursors — the ones who go before the Lord preparing his way. Simeon and Anna are ready to go to their graves in peace because they have touched God's redemption for his people. This child is different from all the others — this child is the Lord.

The author of the Book of Hebrews emphasizes that the child presented not only is the Son of God, but is a human being. He had a full share of blood and flesh. He was tempted, and he suffered [Hebrews 2:14-18]. A while back some theologians asked whether Jesus' divine knowledge of himself would prevent him from experiencing humanity as we do. The answer to this is found later on in the Book of Hebrews — "He emptied himself of his humanity, becoming one of us in all things but sin" [Hebrews 4].

We have in Jesus One who has the power of God because he is the Son of God. We have in Jesus one who has the power to bring God's peace into our lives. Still, we have in Jesus one who is as we are — He wept when his friend Lazarus died; He laughed when he called those noisy lovable twerps, James and John, Sons of Thunder; He was afraid during the Agony of the Garden; He was enraged at evil; He suffered and died for us.

Jesus is the First Paraclete — the perfect intercessor with the Power of God. From this flow two important conclusions: [1] there is nothing that we can share with Him that he has not personally experienced, except that he did not experience sin He is one of us; and [2] there is nothing that He cannot do to heal our problems — He is God among us, "Emmanuel".

The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus helps us fight against the tendency that we all have to drift into the deism of the eighteenth century — the deists believed that they were too far removed from God for God to be intimately concerned with them. We all have the tendency to join the deist way of thinking. We err when, so often, we think that God really can't be concerned with us — "why should the infinite God be concerned with our little problems?"

But then we are forced to ask ourselves: "Are you concerned with your children's problems — even if your children are tiny?" Of course you are! If that is the case, then we can understand how much more God is concerned with our difficulties. He not only loves us — He fills us with His life. We are

**CONTINUING THE MISSION:**

A shoemaker through a dream was told that he would see Jesus the next day. He waited in his store all day. The only one who came in the morning was a senior citizen. His shoes were worn out. The shoemaker gave him a fresh pair at no charge. In the afternoon came an old woman. She was hungry. The shoemaker promptly gave her his own lunch. As evening approached, a child came in crying bitterly. She was lost. The shoemaker took her home to the other end of town. Returning, he was certain that he had missed his rendezvous with the Christ.

Then he heard a voice: "I kept my word. Three times today I came to your door. Three times my shadow was on your floor. I was the beggar with bruised feet; I was the woman you gave food to eat; I was the lost child you took home."

Luke's Gospel for this 3rd Week in Ordinary Time finds Jesus back in His hometown of Nazareth [Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21]. He had come back for a long weekend. He was anxious to spend quality time with His mother. At this point, He was a celebrity. The news about the miracle at Cana had preceded Him — after all, Cana was only about four miles away. Politely He had declined to appear on the cover of a national magazine.

His name was on everybody's lips — a local boy had made good. Every eye in town was on Mary's door. The natives were expecting some kind of fireworks to erupt from the house. If He could do such an amazing thing in Cana, why not in His own backyard? Imagine what it would do for the town's tourist business. However, the Teacher to everyone's annoyance remained out of sight.

Probably He did much-needed carpentry repairs on Mary's house. No doubt she knocked herself out making Him His favorite meals. She was appalled at the weight He had lost on the road. She had heard much about those fast-food shops down in Jerusalem.

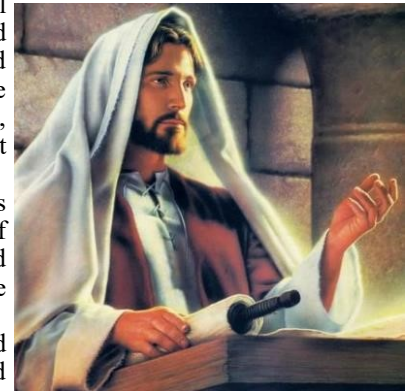
But on the Sabbath, Mary's door swung outwards. With her arm in her Son's, they walked to the synagogue — He would not miss Sabbath worship for all the olive oil in Palestine. There must have been many times when He was bored out of His skull by long, dull homilies. Yet, every Sabbath found Him in a synagogue in whatever town He was. If you have concluded that He was telling us we should be at Mass each Sunday, you have broken the code — there was never anything subtle about the Lord.

You can bet your life the synagogue was packed to the rafters that morning. Not even a shoehorn would get another body in. If scalpers could have sold tickets, they could have retired that day and moved to the south of France. Know that Jesus and His mother were given two seats on the aisle way up front immediately.

Predictably the synagogue president invited our Leader to read the Scriptures. He well knew that if he had not, he might be lynched by his fellow townspeople.

The Teacher deliberately chose the particular passages from Isaiah that He wanted to share with His neighbors that morning. These are the first recorded adult words of Jesus the Christ. The sixty first chapter of Isaiah is oftentimes called the "Gospel of the Old Testament". The words of Isaiah would constitute the inaugural address of the Savior — they tell us what Jesus is all about, and what He considers His most important mission — He had come among His own to bring happy news to the poor, to tell captives they were free, to open the eyes of the blind, and to relieve the burdens of the oppressed.

Having finished the reading, He rejoined His proud mother. She realized that every eye in the



synagogue was on her Son.

Luke does not tell us how His audience reacted to the message, for their reaction is not really important. The reaction which is crucial is mine and yours — Jesus allows each of us to make up our own minds.

As we make up our minds, listen to the sixteenth century Spanish mystic, St Teresa of Avila — “Christ has no body on earth now but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which He is to bless people now.”

The shoemaker took her advice. Why don't we?

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

THE PRESENTATION AND THE PASCHAL MYSTERY:

In the story of the Presentation [Luke 2:22-40], Luke gives us a preview of the major themes that he will develop in his gospel. The first one is that God is not always present with us in the story of our lives in the way we expect. Jesus, the long awaited Messiah, is born poor — his parents are not even able to offer the customary lamb of the well-to-do, but only “a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.” Then Simeon, inspired by the Holy Spirit, recognizes the child Jesus to be “the promised one of God”, yet sensed that the child's mother would know deep sorrow. Michelangelo's famous marble sculpture expresses the meaning of this sorrow as we see the grieving Mary holding the crucified, lifeless body of her son on her lap. That God would bring salvation through such a painful death to the Messiah and such sorrow to his mother is surely contrary to our human logic and expectation.

Luke juxtaposes the event of the Presentation of the Lord with prayer — another major theme of his gospel. As Jesus is presented in the temple, Mary and Joseph offer their child to God in prayer. Simeon and the prophetess, Anna, bless God for the redemption this child Jesus will one day bring to an oppressed people. Prayer is a means by which we can be freed from the ways of thinking of a fallen humanity, and be in touch with God's way of thinking. All of us probably at times have succumbed to a superficial, self-serving kind of prayer in which we explain to God exactly how and when the divine power must resolve a difficult situation in our favor. When our expectation is not realized, we tend to doubt whether God really cares about us when more suffering seems to be the only outcome of our prayer. For this reason, Luke takes special care to show us the way Jesus prays — particularly when he realizes that his death is at hand. At this moment, Jesus also realizes what deep grief his suffering and death will bring to his mother.



When Jesus realized that his arrest by Roman soldiers was imminent, he went to the Mount of Olives to pray alone, saying: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done” [Luke 22:42]. Only his faith, beyond human logic, enabled him to trust that his Father's will for him could only be love, even though he would suffer and be killed. The cup of suffering, in fact, was not taken away. Jesus, dying an excruciating death on a cross, cried out in a loud voice: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” [Luke 23:46]. The trust of Jesus in his Father's love — when every logical reason for trust had been lost — was vindicated in the resurrection. Human and divine love proved to be more powerful than evil and death; that love transformed suffering and death to become life-giving for all of us. The special grace of the Eucharist, through our deeper communion in the life of the Risen Lord, is the gift of praying with unconditional trust in our Father's love in our time of distress and suffering. This is the bond of love in Christ which will transform our meaningless suffering into life-giving grace for others.

The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus is a call to awaken within us the mystery of God's love in the person of the Messiah. It awakens with us also the call to live the Paschal Mystery — the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus.

—taken from the writings of Father Campion Gavalier, O.S.B., which appear on the internet

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SILENT WHEN YOU SHOULD BE SCREAMING?

Have you ever read this passage from the Prophet Jeremiah? If not, you should read it often: “the Lord answered me: “Say not, ‘I am too young.’ To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Have no fear before them, because I am with you to deliver you’, says the Lord” [Jeremiah 1:7-8].

Have you ever had a chance to stand up for God, or speak about your faith, and not take it? Have you ever kept quiet when you knew that deep down you should say something that would let people know you were a Christian? Have you ever felt like you are looked down upon by other people who are older, or by people you work with, as being ignorant, or immature, or naive?

Once you take an active role in your faith, you're going find yourself in some tough situations from time to time. Sometimes, it is better not to say anything at all, and to preach by a “holy example” — and we cannot forget the fact that “actions do speak louder than words”. On the other hand, a lot of times, if we don't speak up in certain situations because we would be uncomfortable, or we think it's not our job, or that “someone else should — someone older or more knowledgeable”.

Now does that sound like what God is telling us to do through the Prophet Jeremiah? Jeremiah was a prophet living in very tough times; people were being taken into slavery, murdered and imprisoned. To make matters worse, Jeremiah was very young, and not very well-liked, or respected by some of his older countrymen. He didn't know what to say or what to do, but he DID do a couple things right — he trusted in the Lord, and he relied on Him, alone.

Watch for situations around you in the next few days when acting like a Catholic Christian might mean you are looked at differently. Take action and don't wait! Don't pass up an opportunity to do what's RIGHT today — to allow Jesus to work through you. You are the hands, and feet, and voice of Jesus in this world. Affirm someone, smile at someone, reach out to someone, forgive someone, compliment someone, challenge someone — NEVER miss a chance to be a leader in your faith, and never say that “you'll do it when you get older.” Christ is calling us — you and me — today to lead — regardless of our age, level of education, personality, or speaking ability.

Think about it. Jesus did a lot with a bunch of fishermen who weren't the smartest, and probably didn't smell too good — think about all that He wants to do with and for YOU today.

“What I believe about God is THE most important thing about me” [A.W. Tozer].

—The Bible Geek

A YOUNG ADULT GROUP:

A Young Adult group has formed at Our Lady Chapel. They will be holding their next meeting at 11:45 AM on Sunday, February 23rd. They will be discussing Lent in today's world. We celebrate this 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 members 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.

