

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer of a Stalled Heart ~

**My heart is cold today, O God,
I feel no burning desire,
no zeal to pray
or be with you.**

**My heart is frozen by the chill of emptiness—
sluggish and stalled.**

**Send forth your Spirit
to revive my heart.**

**Spark it with a relish for service,
with a longing to pray.**

**Take me beyond the need to feel
the reassurance of a lover's heart.**

**May I seek to love and serve you,
even when my wintry heart
declines to dance
with springtime grace.**

**Remind me of the ageless truth
that we become what we pretend to be.**

**And as this long day passes,
may I begin to glimpse a growing warmth
beyond my words and deeds,
the marriage of what I would be
and what I am.**

**And may my desire
to be your flame of warmth and love
spark other stalled souls
to come alive, aflame in you.**

**May this be so, O God,
may this be so.**

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.

FAITH EDUCATION — SCHEDULE:

Meeting dates for February are the 9th and the 23rd. Faith Education is an important part of every person's formation. Please make sure that you have not forgotten this important responsibility for your children. 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.

**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.

**THE CHAPEL INDOOR PICNIC IS RETURNING:**

Put this date aside; mark your calendars! Sunday, March 2nd is the date for the return 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. **Please sign up on the Picnic RSVP sheet in the vestibule of the chapel. If you would like to bring your favorite side dish or desert to share, there is a space to indicate that on the sheet. We hope you can join us!**

**MEN'S RETREAT — SAVE THE DATE:**

Thursday, May 1st, from 6:00—8:30 PM will be our annual Spring Men's Retreat. All men of Our Lady Chapel and the Gilmour Academy Men's Club and their guests are invited to join us. We will begin with **Mass in Our Lady Chapel at 6:00 PM, and then move to the Center for Performing Arts for a light supper, and our evening of discussion, led by Fr. John**. There is no cost, but we are requesting a free will offering for the evening. If you cannot make it for Mass or for dinner, you are still welcome to attend the evening of spiritual conversation — come when you are able! Mark the date on your calendars and give yourself a treat in the Lord! **Sign up on the retreat sheet located on the easel in the narthex of Our Lady Chapel or contact Patty in the Chapel Office (440) 473-3560 or szaniszlup@gilmour.org**

**NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:**

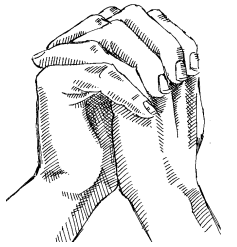
Blessed Basile Moreau was the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, to which Fr. John and the Brothers at Gilmour belong. We have two booklets with Novenas to Blessed Basile Moreau. One is used for a personal intention or healing; the other is used when praying for the intention or healing of someone 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.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- 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 Josephine Fernando, who is seriously ill.
- For Father Ray Sutter, pastor emeritus of St. Matthias Parish, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Nick Chiacchiarì, father of Mark Chiacchiarì ['94], father-in-law of Michelle Chiacchiarì ['96], and grandfather of Aurelia ['28], and Olivia ['30] Chiacchiarì, 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.
- For James Sweeney, grandfather of Danny Rogozinski ['35], who is under the care of hospice.
- For Rick Shelby, who is recovering from open heart surgery
- For Brother Dan Kane, C.S.C., former long-time instructor at Gilmour, who is under hospice care.
- For Brother James Reilly, C.S.C., who is under hospice care.
- For Mary Vereb, who is preparing for surgery.
- For Roger Fafrak, father of former music director, Matt Fafrak, who is undergoing medical treatment.

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For John Roddy, son of Frank Roddy, brother of Tim Roddy ['87], and brother of Gilmour Marketing associate, Mary Roddy Stretar, uncle of Katie ['29] and Anne ['30] Stretar, and cousin of Daniel ['83], Mike ['85], and Matt ['86] Roddy; [Birthday].
- For Brother Edward Luther, C.S.C.
- 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.
- For Michon Shenk Haymer ['96]
- For Betty Bickett Botti, mother of Bradley ['74] and Timothy ['80] Bickett
- For Father William Jerse, retired pastor of St. Jerome Parish in Euclid
- For Teresa Jankovich

CENTER OF MY LIFE:

Jesus has to be and to become evermore the center of my life. It is not enough that Jesus is my teacher, my guide, my source of inspiration. It is not even enough that he is my companion on the journey, my friend, and my brother.

Jesus must become the heart of my heart, the fire of my life, the lover of my soul, the bridegroom of my spirit. He must become my only thought, my only concern, my only desire. The thousands of people, events, ideas, and plans that occupy my inner life must become all one in the one and only name: Jesus.

—Henri Nouwen 11

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 [2/1/25] _____ \$ 276.00
Total Offerings: Sunday [2/2/25] _____ \$ 541.00

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 crashes in Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia, and for their families.
- 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 9: 5th Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, February 10 St. Scholastica	NO MASS
Tuesday, February 11:	NO MASS
Wednesday, February 12:	1:15 PM
Thursday, February 13:	NO MASS
Friday, February 14: SS. Cyril and Methodius	NO MASS
Saturday, February 8: 6th Week in Ordinary Time	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, February 9: 6th Week in Ordinary Time	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream

WOMEN’S EVENING OF RETREAT — SAVE THE DATE:

Tuesday, May 6th from 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM will be our annual Women’s Spring Retreat. All women of Our Lady Chapel and the Gilmour Academy Women’s Club and their guests are invited to join us. We will begin with **Mass in Our Lady Chapel at 6:00 PM, and then move to the Center for Performing Arts for a light supper, and our evening of discussion, led by Fr. John.** There is no cost, but we are requesting a free will offering for the evening. If you cannot make it for Mass or for dinner, you are still welcome to attend the evening of spiritual conversation — come when you are able! Mark the date on your calendars and give yourself a treat in the Lord! We will **post a sign up sheet on the Easel in the coming weeks.** Or you may contact **Patty in the Chapel Office at (440) 473-3560 or szaniszlop@gilmour.org**



A REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME:

Luke's gospel for this 5th Week in Ordinary Time is a kind of biblical "fish story", containing an important point for us to contemplate. Normally, fish stories deal with things like the big Northern Pike that got away right at the end of an enormous struggle by the stout fisherman — "it must have been over a yard and a half long!". Almost in the boat, the huge fish snaps free of the hook and swims off! Once again, the wily Northern trumps the skilled fisher person who now had a tale to be told with great delight later.

The disciples have spent the whole night "toiling and had caught nothing." As professional fishermen, they must have been disappointed. Fishing in the right places at the right time, they should have seen big results from their labors. But no — all they had was a tale to tell afterwards.

We could also call this "Good Excuse" weekend. In the long history of God's calling persons to be personal with their response, there is the aspect of always having a reason not to agree or cooperate. They are usually very good objections — Abraham and Sarah were too old to have a child [see Genesis 17], Moses stuttered [see Exodus 4], Jeremiah was too young [see Jeremiah 1], and "woe-is-me" Isaiah [Isaiah 6:1-8].

Isaiah — this poor soul — seems to be in the wrong place at the right time — at least from the point of view of God. He hears and sees the Holy One and immediately reflects upon himself and his being "a man of unclean lips". He tells the truth and hopes that it will give him a free pass back to his living "among people of unclean lips". He does not know exactly what might be asked of him, but he knows himself to be unworthy of anything so holy.

Talk about being a person in the wrong place at the right time, we have Peter! Luke presents us with Jesus "getting into Simon's boat" [Luke 5:1-11]. Jesus had been preaching to the crowd, and, because of their great number, they crowded him further towards the waters of the Sea of Galilee. To alleviate the situation, Jesus stepped into Simon's boat and asked him to go out a bit from the shore. There he preached to the people from the boat in the shallow waters. Afterwards, Jesus he turned to Simon and said: "go out into the deep water and lower the nets for a catch".

Simon — the pro fisherman — must have resisted the request because he had just done battle with the sea and had caught nothing. But this "fish story" had a much fuller meaning soon to be discovered — to Simon's surprise, they caught a great number of fish so that their nets were bursting. In astonishment they call to their companions in another boat to come and help them contain their enormous catch.

Simon is overwhelmed, and he realizes that he is in the presence of the Holy. He kneels down at the feet of Jesus and tells his truth — "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." As with Isaiah, Peter hopes this gets him a ticket back to his boat. Jesus does not deny Peter's truth, nor does He disqualify Peter by replacing Peter with somebody else from the crew who might not be so sinful.

But Jesus sees something else in Simon — "do not be afraid from now on you will be catching people." Instead of taking Simon to task for his imperfection, Jesus tells Simon that He wanted Peter to help Him catch all souls in His net of loving forgiveness. Peter has a very good and personal excuse. He has a name and an image for himself that, in his eyes, disqualifies him from being close to Jesus. Peter has a good case of Spiritual Inferiority. He has judged himself, labeled himself, and signed himself as unfit for being in Jesus' company. He is "just" a fisherman, "just" a simple human being, and that



IT'S NOT ABOUT BEING WORTHY?

The New Yorker magazine once ran a wonderful cartoon of a psychiatrist and his patient. The caption has him saying to her: "Madam, please do not get angry. I'm only trying to save you money. You should feel guilty." The late Archbishop Fulton Sheen said that instead of becoming penitents many of us become patients. If you have ever seen it, the Lake of Galilee [Gennesaret] possesses a picture postcard beauty. If you were to rent an Air Chance helicopter, you would see a pear-shaped body of water about thirteen miles long and eight miles wide. It enjoys almost a tropical climate. In the time of the Christ, there were ten prosperous towns situated around the lake. Almost all of those people made their living from the waters in front of them. Thus, one gets an idea of how rich the lake was in fish. This point makes it difficult to understand how the professional fisherman Peter and his companions had come up empty the night before. All they had caught were bad colds, a pair of old sneakers, some empty bottles, and crabs dead from advanced old age. Some years ago, I swam in the Lake of Galilee. I watched Jewish teens water-skiing on its surface. I wondered if they ever recalled that a fellow Jew had once walked on the same waters without skis.

Early morning Peter and his people were cleaning their nets on the shore [Luke 5:1-11]. At the same time, Jesus was well into His long workday. He was preaching to huge crowds on the beach. Because of Cana and several other miracles, He had become a reluctant celebrity. The village synagogues were no longer large enough to hold the people anxious to hear Him. So, He preached on the beaches. The Teacher was not bound to old methods. He was willing to try new ways of reaching people. If the mountain would not come to Jesus, He would go to the mountain. We should be as enterprising as He. The mob was so eager to hear Him they were pushing Him into the lake for an unwanted swim. Jesus had to be an awesome preacher. When was the last time you fought for ringside seats to hear a preacher? Quickly the Nazarene jumped into the high bow of Peter's large boat drawn up on the sand. The bow became His pulpit. Once His instruction was finished, He ordered Peter to cast off.



Jesus was about to give him a payback catch — even for Jesus there was no such thing as a free meal. We can thus assume that He will likewise return us dividends whenever we freely cooperate with Him. Before the miracle catch, Peter addressed the Christ as "Master". Jesus was just an interesting rabbi but nothing more. But then the nets were dragged into the boat overflowing with fish. At that point, Luke stresses Peter was no longer on his feet but on his knees. And this time he called Jesus "Lord". It was not that Peter was an incisive theologian. Rather, like all his fellow Jews, he believed that anyone who possessed control over the waters also possessed divinity. Such a man had to be the Messiah. Notice also what Peter says: "I am a sinful man."

The *Wall Street Journal* carried an article that posed the question: "When was the last time you had a good conversation about sin?" Most of us would have to reply that we no longer have such discussions. We have become sinless. If so, one should not wonder why the world is in the state it is. Why not examine your conscience against this benchmark? In the home, Christianity is kindness. In business, it's honesty. In society, it's courtesy. In work, it's fairness. To the unfortunate, it's sympathy. To the weak, it's help. To the evil, it's resistance.

When a priest speaks about sin, do you shrug and conclude he is speaking about someone else? If affirmative, I respectfully suggest you reflect on *The New Yorker* cartoon. Perhaps you should feel guilty. Are you Fulton Sheen's penitent or patient? When was the last time you were at confession?

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

Your wife, your husband, has been severely ill. Worse, one of your children is chronically ill. You are continually going back and forth to the hospital, back and forth to the doctor. You are exhausted, physically and emotionally. “I can’t do this,” you say. “I’ve always hated hospitals. I get squeamish just at the site of blood.” But God has called you to be a care giver. He’ll give you the strength to get through it all

You might just be a teenager, but you have so much pressure. School work can be tough. It can be boring. Some subjects are fun and come easy. But then there are those that drive you up a wall. You can’t seem to get it right. You are on a team or in a club, and there are high expectations placed on your back. And then there is the constant drama with your friends. Who is not talking to who and why? On top of all this there is peer pressure. Others tell you that you are the only one who doesn’t drink, doesn’t take drugs, doesn’t have sex. They are lying — or at least they don’t know everyone else — but still they put pressure on you to join them in their self-destructive behavior. You have all this pressure and you say: “I can’t do this. I can’t be a committed Catholic.” You are correct — alone you can’t, but with God you can. He has called you to bring the message of his Kingdom to those who have rejected him. He has called you to develop into the man or woman who will lead his people. He even gave you a new name at your baptism. He calls you His Child, His Son, His Daughter. Think about this, God doesn’t just call you Liz; He calls you His Daughter Liz. He doesn’t just call you Bill. He calls you His Son Bill.

You can do this, and I can do this. We can be Christians thoroughly committed to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We can do this because the One who has called us gives us the power to complete his mission. All of us have times that we are convinced we are the least likely to perform a role that God has set for us — perhaps as a parent, perhaps as a care giver, certainly as a committed Christian. We all might think that we are the least likely to serve God. But we are wrong. Like Peter, Paul and Isaiah, we might think we are the least likely, but God has called us. In His mind, with His help, with His Divine Mercy, we are each the perfect choice.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday:	Song of Songs 8:6-7, Luke 10:38-42
Tuesday:	Genesis 1:20-2:4a, Mark 7:1-13
Wednesday:	Genesis 2:4b-9, 15-17; Mark 7:14-23
Thursday:	Genesis 2:18-25, Mark 7:24-30
Friday:	Acts 13:46-49, Luke 10:1-9
Saturday:	Genesis 3:9-24, Mark 8:1-10

6th Week in Ordinary Time: Jeremiah 17:5-8, 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20, Luke 6:17, 20-26

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].



automatically makes him not “just.”

What stands out in the story is a two-fold blessing Jesus invites the fishermen to notice — [1] “go out into the deep” and [2] “do not be afraid.” Going out into the “deep” implies not simply the deeper waters of the Lake, but so much more. For the disciples, and us the “deep” is a metaphor for things greater than the depth of the sea; it’s an invitation to throw one’s whole self into the call Jesus sends out to the fishermen. That call is extended as a blessing to all faithful Christians from the disciples’ time to our present day.

The “do not be afraid” message is much more than simply a consoling word Jesus says to his special new set of friends. Afraid of what? It doesn’t matter! The point is that Jesus is with us — along with Simon and his pals. Ultimately, we need not be afraid since Jesus’ promise will make all the difference in the world.

Simon gets a new name, a new job, and a new image of himself — and all three take time to complete their transformation. Peter remains quite Simon, for a long time, and spends much time trying to change his job of catching up with the work of Jesus. He meets Jesus and therein continues meeting himself and his truth for a long time. Peter seems to be always echoing the words of Isaiah: “here I am lord.” Peter is always a wonderful image of us all. Here I am Lord, but I am not enough. Here I am — you see me and so You know very well the validity of my self-image, my label. They are such good excuses!

We kneel down today at the feet of Jesus with our truth, our excuses, and our empty nets and as accurate as they are; we are forced to hear His truth, His name for us, His call. Our call into service is a call to trust in Jesus’ promise — that despite my status paralleling Simon Peter’s, I too am invited to give in to following him more closely. What a joy! We are fishers “of people” like the disciples. Might this be the ultimate “fish story?”

Thank you, Lord for your care and love of us as you call us to service like yours. We are abundantly blessed by your invitation. We count on your promise and our desire to receive your call. That promise is your way of loving and serving us — be with us as we serve others in imitating you.

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

A VEIN WORTH MINING:

St. Benedict had a sister — Scholastica — who also dedicated her life to the pursuit of God. She too founded monasteries and became an abbatial figure. The only story we have of Scholastica is told when Benedict was already an abbot of renown. The incident demonstrates clearly that the brother and sister were emotionally close, and both of them had a spiritual influence on the other till the time of her death.

During one of their annual visits, Scholastica, inspired by the depth of their conversation, asked Benedict to remain overnight in the place where they were meeting in order to continue their talk and reflection on spiritual things. Benedict wouldn’t even think of it. It was getting dark; it was time to get back to the monastery; it was time to get on with the regular routine of the spiritual life. Unable to persuade him with words, Scholastica put her head down on the table in deep prayer. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a great storm brought flash floods, and Benedict realized that he could not possibly return to the monastery that night. And the Dialogues say: “he complained bitterly.” He said: “God forgive you, sister! What have you done?” Scholastica answered simply: “I asked you for a favor and you refused. I asked my God and I got it.”



This story is a vein worth mining for a lifetime — it tells us that law is never greater than love; it tells us to be intent on pursuing the values of life, not simply its rules; it tells us that discipline is necessary in the spiritual life, but that religious discipline is not enough, that depth is a process and that depth costs; it tells us that God lurks in strange places, and waits for us, and puts in our paths just what we need in order to become what we are meant to be; it tells us that spiritual friendship is of the essence, everyone needs someone who knows their soul.

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

LIVING OUR FAITH:

In his letter to the Church at Corinth, Paul offers us a short creed — a brief summary of Christian faith — “For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve” [1 Corinthians 15:1-11]. Let us examine the four components of this short creed — Christ died, was buried, was raised to life, and appeared to many.

Jesus, the Word made flesh, shared fully in the human condition. From the moment of our conception, we are shadowed by death — the one inevitable event on our journey. Jesus did not seek death, but he did freely accept it as the by-product of absolute fidelity to the cause of God and humanity — which incurred the ire of the religious and political establishment. The death of Jesus is a commonly accepted historical fact. He was executed during the governorship of Pontius Pilate in or around 30 A.D. by crucifixion — the cruel form of capital punishment Rome commonly used to intimidate and control subjugated populations. For Paul, the death of Jesus fulfilled the promises of the Hebrew scriptures and offered expiations for our sins. His short creed also affirms that Jesus was buried — indicating that he really did die and setting the stage for his resurrection on the third day.

Paul — who said nothing about the empty tomb tradition — concentrated on the fundamental affirmation that God raised Jesus on the third day, according to the Scriptures. For Paul, Jesus did not raise himself to life, nor were there any eye witnesses to the event. However, the risen Christ did take the initiative and appeared to many disciples — including Paul himself. They became the witnesses to the reality and power of the death, burial, raising and appearing of Christ.

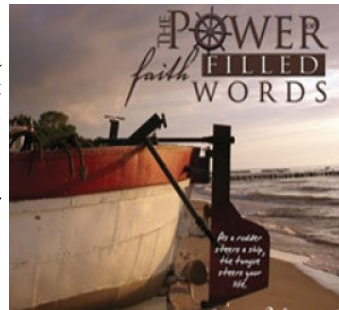
In today’s complex, busy, pluralistic, technological world, we need to concentrate on the fundamentals of our Christian faith. Given the knowledge explosion and the availability of diverse theological opinions, we need a firm grasp of the core Gospel message. Paul’s short creed reminds us that authentic Christian belief emphasizes both the death and the resurrection of Christ. Good Friday without Easter can lead to a heavy somber piety that lacks joy. Resurrection without the cross can lead to a romantic utopian spirituality that appears unrealistic. Reflecting on Paul’s creed, Christians heavily burdened by the crosses of life can find strength by embracing the risen Christ. Christians tempted to downplay the power of evil in the world can become more realistic by reflecting on the passion and death of Jesus.

What step could you take to develop a more balanced spirituality?

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

TRUTH:

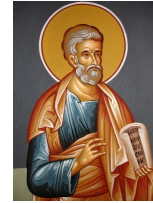
God loves you not because of what you do, but because of who He is.



LEAST LIKELY — PERFECT CHOICE:

The Scripture Readings for this 5th Week in Ordinary Time present us with three men — Peter, Paul and Isaiah. All have been called by God. All appear to be unlikely choice to perform the mission that they were given. Each one, though, was the perfect choice.

Simon, was a fisherman. He knew the sea. He knew where to find fish — at least most of the time. He was a big man, an ox of a man. He was the leader of the group, but that was a small group of four fishermen consisting in himself, his brother, Andrew, and the two Zebedee kids — James and John. He was probably illiterate. Yes, the New Testament lists two letters attributed to him, but he could have dictated these to a Christian scribe. Simon was just a good, hard, blue collar worker we would say, an everyday laborer. He was the least likely to lead an international movement. He had never been outside of Galilee and Judea. But this man, Simon, the Son of a man named Jonah, was called by the Lord to lead the Church, personally bringing the Gospel message all the way to Rome. He was the least likely to do this. But Jesus called him. He gave him a new name: Peter — the Rock. And Peter was the perfect choice. God made him the perfect choice.



Saul of Tarsus was brilliant. He wasn’t just literate — he was scholarly. He was a student of Gamaliel — one of the most important rabbinical teachers of the ancient world. Saul knew the scripture and the Jewish practices better than most people of his time. He was passionate for the Hebrew religious law. He was more enthusiastic than most Pharisees. He would hunt down the followers of Christ, convinced that their way of life was polluting the Holy Land of Israel. Saul was certainly not someone you would choose to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What is more, he is the last person you would expect who would argue that the gentiles did not have to first become Jewish before becoming Christian. But Christ called Saul as he traveled on the road to Damascus. He was given a new name: Paul. Least likely? No, Paul was the perfect choice. He was the perfect choice to spread the Good News. God made him the perfect choice.



700 years before Peter and Paul, a man was chosen to be a prophet for Israel. His name was Isaiah. The main focus of his prophecy was on the holiness of God. The “Holy Holy Holy” that we sing during Mass is taken from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. But Isaiah was certainly not the person anyone would expect to proclaim God’s holiness. He was a man with unclean lips. What did that mean? In our days when we accuse someone of having a dirty mouth we mean that his language is vulgar, offensive, and abusive. Perhaps Isaiah was filthy that way. Or perhaps he was a liar, a violator of the eighth commandment. Or perhaps he was someone who was not thoroughly devoted to Yahweh and even ate food that the Jewish people were not allowed to eat, such as pork, shell fish and food sacrificed to pagan gods. These are some of the ways that his lips might have been unclean. Yet, those lips were chosen to proclaim the holiness of God. God purified these lips. God made Isaiah the perfect choice.



God does that. He did that for Peter, Paul and Isaiah. He does that for us. He makes each of us the perfect choice.

So the brand new Mom and Dad bring their baby home from the hospital. Do you parents remember that day? Everyone was excited. Then they left. And your baby was colicky. Where were those people at 2 AM in the morning? Like the guy in the commercial, the Dad said to himself: “I’m a sports car kind of guy; not a van guy.” As she rocked the baby all day, and all night, the Mom said to herself: “I don’t know if I’m ready for this.” Both Mom and Dad said to themselves — not to each other, and certainly not to their own parents — “I can’t do this.” But God called them, called you, to be parents. He even gave you new names: “Mommy and Daddy.” There are no better parents for your child, your children, than you. God made you the perfect choice.