

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ Praying during the 4th Week of Lent ~

O Jesus,
Light of the world,
why were you born,
and why did you die
in such obscurity?

Bethlehem was hardly a shining place —
the stable hardly a burning stand
for light to come into the world.

Was not Calvary too
an ending place
for life and light?
And would not a cross
in the afternoon sky,
turn all eyes away?

Blind man,
did your eyes turn away too?
Or were you
so accustomed to the dark
as to see what others could not see?

For once —
it was not long ago —
Someone seeing you all in darkness
touched your eyes
and told you to wash
until you saw God's glory
shining through your beggar's clothes.

And you believed.
No one could stop you,
or explain it all away.
You believed.

And so do I.
Amen.

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.
phone: [440] 473-3560 [office] or 216-570-9276 [cell].

Our Lady Chapel



Our Lady Chapel is a Roman Catholic community founded in the love of the Father, centered in Christ, and rooted in the Holy Cross tenets of building family and embracing diversity. We are united in our journey of faith through prayer and sacrament, and we seek growth through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in liturgy and outreach, while responding to the needs of humanity.

THE CHOSEN:

As part of our Lenten Journey, we are going to view an episode of *The Chosen*, and follow it up with a discussion. This will take place on **Sunday, April 13 [Palm Sunday] from 11:30 AM until 1 PM. A Pizza lunch will be provided.**

The Chosen is an American Christian historical drama television series. Created, directed, and co-written by filmmaker Dallas Jenkins, it is the first multi-season series about the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Primarily set in Judaea and Galilee in the 1st century, the series depicts the life of Jesus through the eyes of the people who interacted with him, including the apostles and disciples of Jesus, Jewish religious leaders, Roman government and military officials, and ordinary people.

In contrast with typical Bible-focused productions, Jenkins has given more depth to his scripts by adding backstories to various characters from the gospels without contradicting the material of the gospel.

Although the show has an evangelical tendency, there are consultants from three Christian faith traditions providing input. Acting as consultants are Messianic rabbi Jason Sobel from Fusion Global Ministries; Catholic priest and national director of Family Theater Productions Father David Guffey [a Holy Cross Priest]; and professor of New Testament at Biola University Dr. Doug Huffman. They review scripts and provide facts or context on the biblical, cultural, and socio-political history of the storyline.

It is hoped that this presentation will lead to other such presentations in the future. If you have any questions, please contact Father John or the chapel office [440-473-3560].

PENANCE SERVICE:

Our community celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be held on **Monday, April 14th at 7:00 PM.** Our service is centered around reflections by the various characters involved in the passion and death of Jesus. There will also be songs and hymns, and a time to bring ourselves from our sinful ways back to the Lord. As we confront our own sinfulness, we realize that we, too, have a part to play in the death of Jesus. The service will last about 45 minutes. There will be a time for individual confessions following the service, for those who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity. Please join us.

SCHEDULE OF HOLY WEEK/EASTER SERVICES:

- **Palm Sunday — April 12th-13th — Mass at 5:00 PM Saturday and 10:00 AM Sunday.**
- **Communal Penance Service — Monday, April 14th at 7:00 PM**
- **Virtual Bible Study on the Theology of Holy Week in Scripture on Wednesday, April 15th at 6:30 PM.**
- **Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, April 17th at 7:00 PM.**
- **Stations of the Cross on Good Friday, April 18th at 1:00 PM.**
- **Proclamation of the Passion, Veneration of the Cross and Communion Service on Good Friday, April 18th at 3:00 PM.**
- **Easter Vigil Service will be at 8:45 PM on Saturday, April 19th.**
- **Easter Sunday Mass will be at 10:00 AM on Sunday, April 20th.**

**HOPE:**

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.

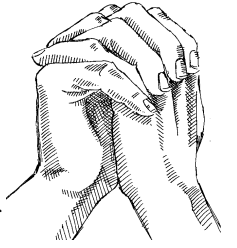
—Desmond Tutu

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 Nick Chiacchiari, father of Mark Chiacchiari ['94], father-in-law of Michelle Chiacchiari ['96], and grandfather of Aurelia ['28], and Olivia ['30] Chiacchiari, who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Thomas Noble who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Denise George, who is in rehab following a stroke.
- 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 Mary Vereb, who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For Danielle Adam, who is recovering from surgery, and undergoing further testing.
- For Toddy McMonagle who has been diagnosed with cancer.
- For Chris Keller, former trustee, who is under the care of hospice.
- For Tara Hyland Zittel ['07] who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jeff Overman, brother of Upper school teacher, John Overman, uncle of Jack ['25], and former Gilmour student, Michael Overman., who is critically ill.
- For Hailey Grasso, who is preparing for serious surgery
- For Sister Rosemary Hammer, H.M., former religion teacher, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Brother Carl Sternberg, C.S.C., who is seriously ill and undergoing medical testing.

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Brother Richard Keller, C.S.C. [anniversary]
- For Peter Poolos, father of Mark Poolos ['91]
- For Antoinetta Soreo, grandmother of Jamie Bergsman-Unger ['09], and grandmother-in-law of Jared Unger ['09]
- For Donald Staufer
- For Holly Burke, mother of Hannah ['10] and Nathaniel ['10] Burke., and mother-in-law of Alexandra Haynes ['09]
- For Karen Vereb
- For Eileen Issing, mother of Father Dan Issing, C.S.C.
- For Janet Korn, grandmother of Erin Rossoll ['27], and mother-in-law of former Business Office Associate, Becky Korn.
- For Steve Ehretzman
- For Katherine Howley, sister of Dan ['61], Lee ['65] and Tom ['68] Howley, aunt of Chris ['85], Sarah ['87], Mike ['89] Howley., Blaine Westropp ['08], Ashley Sommers Westropp ['08].
- For Sister Paulette Snyder, O.S.U.

A GOOD LESSON:

There's so much joy to be felt in slowness and softness.

—Ra Avis

THERE ARE NO STRINGS ATTACHED:

An amazing thing about Luke’s Gospel [15:1-3,11-32] is that before the new lectionary which was issued in 1970, we never heard Jesus’ story of the prodigal father proclaimed at a weekend liturgy. And frequently, when it did come up in religion classes or sermons, the last part — the older brother’s reaction — was left out. Probably, part of the reason that it was left out is that this story wasn’t as emphasized in our Catholic teaching as it was in Luke’s gospel. Also present was the fact that in early Christianity, sacramental confession was not nearly as developed as it is today.

In the old days, sacramental confession was about the only way our sins could be forgiven — though a door was always left open for Protestants and other “confession-less” people to be forgiven by making an act of perfect contrition — but it was always pointed out that these unfortunate individuals couldn’t ever be 100 percent certain their sins were actually forgiven by employing that “iffy method”. This became further complicated when we all realize that no one was capable of ever making a perfect act of contrition. Thank God we are born Catholic!

Furthermore, in the early days of the Church, sacramental confession — and the public penance which accompanied it — came into existence and was reserved only for people who had committed apostasy, adultery, or murder — sins which could destroy the Christian community.

Add to that Thomas Aquinas’ disturbing *Summa Theologica* answer to the question: “At what point in the confessional process are one’s sins actually forgiven?” Was the answer “when the priest gives absolution, after we say our act of contrition, when we finish our penance?” No — the greatest of theologians responded: “At the moment you’re sorry for your sins.”

The fact is that we, like the son of the prodigal father, surprisingly receive God’s forgiveness as something freely offered, no strings attached, even if we never can make restitution for the harm our sinful actions created. That doesn’t remove the need for sacramental reconciliation, but it certainly does need to change our attitude toward it.

The older brother is the problem element of the parable — and it is the reason Luke narrates this story in the first place. The older brother can’t help but point out to his father that he’s constantly played by the rules and never even pushed the envelope. Yet his profligate brother is now on a par with him! The older brother is convinced that’s not the way parents — or God — should operate. Everyone is to get what they deserve. To the boy’s dismay, Jesus simply points out that neither most parents, or God operate on that level.

Perhaps that’s why Paul reminds his Corinthian community that “Whoever is in Christ is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold new things have come. And all this is from God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation” [2 Corinthians 5:17-21]. Those who are other Christs are expected to act in ways different from everyone else. We, like Jesus, are to put no conditions on our forgiveness. Someone’s desire to be forgiven is enough.

Just as the Israelites finally reach the Promised Land, celebrate their first Passover, and rejoice in the completion of their Exodus from Egypt [Joshua 5:9-12], so we followers of Jesus are expected to be a rejoicing, forgiven people. But, according to the plan of God revealed through Jesus, we can only rejoice in God’s forgiveness if people around us are rejoicing in our no-strings-attached forgiveness of them. If God’s prodigal with us, what right do we have to be stingy with others?

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

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas, 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.

NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, April 16th at 6:30 PM. Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God’s word. It’s a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can’t come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God’s word.



Our topic: The Theology of Holy Week in Scripture

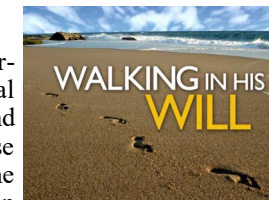
Mark your calendars and be part of this wonderful activity that will deepen your spiritual journey. **We usually will meet every other week — topic to be decided at the end of the previous meeting.** Join us. You’ll have a blast, and celebrate your faith along the way..

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

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| Sunday, March 30: 4thWeek in Lent | 10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream |
| Monday, March 31: | NO MASS |
| Tuesday, April 1: | NO MASS |
| Wednesday, April 2: | 1:15 PM |
| Thursday, April 3: | NO MASS |
| Friday, April 4: | NO MASS |
| Saturday, April 5: 5th Week in Lent | 5:00 PM In Person only |
| Sunday, April 6: 5thWeek in Lent | 10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream |

LET GOD BE GOD:

In all the situations of life the “will of God” comes to us not merely as an external dictate of impersonal law, but above all as an interior invitation of personal love. Too often the conventional conception of “God’s will” as a sphinx-like and arbitrary force bearing down upon us with implacable hostility, leads us to lose faith in a God that we cannot find possible to love. Such a view of the divine will drives human weakness to despair and one wonders if it is not, itself, often the expression of a despair which is too intolerable to be admitted to conscious consideration. These arbitrary “dictates” of a domineering and insensible Father are more often the seeds of hatred than of love. If that is our concept of the will of God, we cannot possibly seek the obscure and intimate mystery of the encounter that takes place in contemplation. We will desire only to fly as far as possible from Him and hide from His Face forever. So much depends on our idea of God! Yet no idea of Him, however pure and perfect, is adequate to express Him as He really is. Our idea of God tells us more about ourselves than about Him.



REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME:

There is much wisdom shared about the sense of hearing. Make time in your life to truly listen. Practice active listening. Put on your listening ears. Tell me your story. We all know the value of being present through careful listening. Yet there are many times when we are not very good at hearing what is being said. Perhaps we have too many distractions; perhaps we suspect that we might need to hear something we don't want to hear; perhaps the story is so familiar that we believe we have already heard it.

Luke's Gospel story of the Prodigal son is a case in point. How many times have we all heard this story? We know where this story is going to take us. Anyone with a younger or older sibling "gets it" [Luke 15:1-3,11-32]. I was ready to tap into my dutiful oldest child resentment of the younger sibling who wasted his inheritance. Yet, I felt some gentle urging from God to listen deeper. As we prepare to read Luke's gospel again, we all need to pray for the grace to deeply listen to the word of God.

What is interesting here is the Pharisee's comment that "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Jesus is always in the midst of the marginalized — we sinners. Rather than focusing on a hard working son who despite doing everything right never gets a party, let's be overwhelmed with the joy expressed by the father who sees his wayward son metaphorically come back to life. There could be no better reason for a joyful celebration. What a perfect message of conversion for this Lenten season.

St. Paul also affirms this thought in his 2nd letter to the Church at Corinth: "whoever is in Christ is a new creation. The old things have passed away; now all things are new! All this has been done by God. We have been reconciled to God through Christ, and we have been given the ministry of reconciliation" [2 Corinthians 5:17-21].

Learning about the experiences of the younger son who spent his entire inheritance on pleasure, we come to understand there have been many gifts in our lives that we have sinfully squandered. We are by nature very self possessive; we are also human-doers, and we are proud of it.

During these days of Lent, we need to seek to return to the Source of life, and accept the truth that acknowledges that we have received the very lives that we have. We need to rediscover that yearning within ourselves to return to the ground or land or home from which we have wandered. The Eucharist is that Home, that resting place where we are welcomed again — prodigal though we may be. We renew the divine embrace, and we pledge once more to live more generously the embrace that we receive.

The taunts of the scribes and pharisees is accurate — Jesus does spend his time with the marginalized and sinners. We are all one of them. And, furthermore, if we are honest, do we ever ask ourselves if we have ever tried to live like Jesus and opened our hearts to sinners with joy and without judgment? As the younger son returns home to his father with contrition and no expectations, we all need to feel an abiding trust in God's love.

But there is another side to the story. Joshua has taken over the leadership of the people of Israel, and has led them for all these years of their wandering in the desert. They finally arrive in their new land which is flowing with abundance [Joshua 5:9-12]. But because of their years of slavery in Egypt and the forty-year pilgrimage in the desert, those men born during these years were not circumcised. Circumcision was the physical sign of agreement or acceptance of the covenant made with Abraham years before. This not being circumcised was the "reproach of Egypt" — because the men of Egypt were not circumcised. At their entering of the new and holy land then, they paused, and one of the first things that they did was have the men more fully enter the Jewish traditions and practices.

At that time then, they celebrated as full members of the Jewish people, the great Passover in remembrance of their being freed from slavery. As part of this celebration, the raining down of manna ended, and they began eating from the produce from their new abundant land. God has been faithful to

Agriculturally, Passover represents the beginning of Israel's harvest season — a time when the people enjoyed the plentiful produce of the land. But for parts of Israel today, the season of Passover does not usher in a lush harvest season. For years, a severe, historic drought and a water crisis have gripped Israel, affecting irrigation capabilities that, in turn, impact agriculture and ecosystems. Even though some efforts have helped to ease the water crisis, the land continues to suffer under ecological oppression caused by environmental factors — namely, climate change. And yet, in the midst of ecological adversity, the celebration of Passover continues in anticipation of an end to all forms of oppression plaguing the world today.

The second topic, **reconciliation**, is the main theme of Paul's second Letter to the Church at Corinth. Here we are reminded that the Divine One remains reconciled to us, and in turn, we have been entrusted with the message of reconciliation [2 Corinthians 5:17-21].

But what does reconciliation mean, and why is it important? In his book, *The Art of Forgiveness: Lovingkindness, and Peace*, Jack Kornfield offers wisdom from the Buddhist tradition. He states: "In Buddhist monasteries when conflict arises, the monks and nuns are encouraged to undertake a formal practice of reconciliation. They begin with this simple intention: 'No matter what the hurt within us, we can seek to be reconciled. Even if we cannot or should not speak to the other, we can find the courage to hold reconciliation and goodwill in our own heart. We can do our part toward the healing of the world.'" Reconciliation aims to repair and restore relationships.

Without a doubt, our world is in need of healing of interpersonal relationships — whether these relationships be among family members, co-workers, friends and even heads of state and leaders of nations. Sanctions, tariffs, cold war tactics, peace treaties and ceasefires are merely temporary solutions to conflicts, disagreements and inequities. With wisdom gained and intelligence developed, with gifts and talents in play alongside good fortune of wealth, power and negotiating skills, human beings have yet to learn how to live and work with each other in a spirit of fecundity, respect, trust, mutual accountability and integrity.

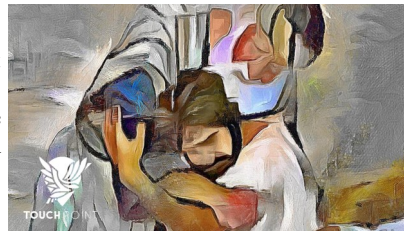
But the Scripture Readings for this 4th Week in Lent go one step further — it is not enough to be a messenger of reconciliation; we must also be reconciled to God.

The third topic emerging from the reading from 2 Corinthians is **God**. Perhaps before we can be reconciled to God, we need to ask: "Who is this God, this Divine One?" Is it the God of the empire whom we meet in the prophetic texts — this God who curses and harms people when they are not "obedient"? Is it the God of Gomer who metes out the harshest of chastisements because she has been cast as an "unfaithful" spouse, a whore? Or maybe this God is a gendered male deity who sits on a throne, a king, casting judgments and ruling over all. Perhaps this God is the "Lord" — a title derived from ancient biblical agrarian societies that had landlords and serfs.

New Testament scholar Sandra Schneiders of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Monroe, Michigan, argues that the question for the 21st century is the "God question" — who or what is God? Old Testament scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza pushes Schneiders' ideas further. She argues that we need to interrogate how the scriptural rhetoric of empire has defined our understanding of the Divine. How we understand the Divine impacts how we live out our lives, how we interact with others and how we make political, social, economic and ecological decisions.

Jesus' parable in the Gospel of Luke offers us an insight into who the Divine One is — even though we can never fully comprehend. The Divine One is **Compassion** — the fourth point that emerges. This Sacred One reconciles, heals broken relationships, welcomes and cherishes all creation. Being reconciled to the God of compassion is bound to have a transformative effect on the one who is reconciled who, in turn, will be not only a messenger of reconciliation but also the embodiment of it.

—taken from the writings of Sister Carol Dempsey, O.P., which appears on the internet



because they deemed them unworthy; but Jesus always protested that he didn't need that kind of protection, and that, indeed, he wanted them all to come to him — "Let them come to me!" Indeed, that is still Jesus' call — "Let them come to me" — all of them!

We need to be more inclusive. I highlight this because today our faith families are shrinking, and instead of us weeping empathically about this loss of wholeness, we are more prone to be secretly gleeful about it — good riddance; they weren't real Christians anyway! Or, in the words of some Catholic commentators, they were Cafeteria-Catholics, picking and choosing which parts of the Gospel they like and turning a meaty Catholicism into Catholic-Light.

Such a judgment, however sincere and well intentioned, needs to operate under two huge caution flags. First, such a judgment leaves the person making it rather vulnerable. Who is a true, fully practicing Catholic? Several years ago, I was asked by a Roman Catholic School Board to write a definition of what it means to be a "practicing Catholic". I agonized over the task, examined the classical working definitions for that, and eventually produced a bit of a formula. But I prefaced the definition with this preamble: Only Jesus and Mary were fully practicing Catholics. Everyone else — without a single exception — falls short. We are all Cafeteria-Catholics. We all fall short; all have shortcomings, and all live the Gospel somewhat selectively. To cite the most salient example: Many of us bear down more on church-going and private morality, to the neglect of the non-negotiable Gospel demand apposite justice — others simply reverse this. Who's closer to Jesus? Who's more of a Cafeteria-Catholic?



The answer to that question lies inside the secret realm of conscience. But what we do know is that none of us gets it fully right. All of us stand in need of God's forgiveness, and all of us stand in need of the patience of our ecclesial communities.

The second caution flag is this: The God that Jesus reveals to us is a God of infinite abundance. Inside God there is no scarcity, no stinginess, no sparing of mercy. As the parable of the Sower makes clear, this God scatters his seed indiscriminately on every kind of soil — bad soil, mediocre soil, good soil, excellent soil. God can do this because God's love and mercy are limitless. God, it seems, never worries about someone receiving cheap, undeserved grace. As well, Jesus assures us that God is prodigal — like the father of the prodigal son and his older brother, God embraces both the missteps of our immaturity as well as the bitterness and resentment within our maturity. Good religion needs to honor that.

Today, on both sides of the ideological divide, conservative or liberal alike, we need to remind ourselves of what it means to live under an abundant, prodigal, universally-embracing, and "Catholic" God. What it means, among other things of course, is a constant stretching of the heart to an ever-wider inclusivity. How wide are our hearts?

Exclusivity can mask itself as depth and as passion for truth; but it invariably reveals itself, in its inability to handle ambiguity and otherness, as rigidity and fear, as if God and Jesus needed our protection. More importantly, it often too reveals itself as lacking genuine empathy for those outside its own circle; and, in that, it fails to honor its own abundant and prodigal God.

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

CELEBRATION, RECONCILIATION, GOD, and COMPASSION:

Four topics emerge from the Scripture Readings for this 4th Week in Lent — celebration, reconciliation, God and compassion. The first, **celebration**, emerges from the reading taken from the book of Joshua that features the Israelites celebrating the eight-day Jewish holiday of Passover. This celebration is one of Judaism's most sacred events — it commemorates the Israelites' liberation from slavery in Egypt and the sparing of the Israelites' firstborn child when the "angel of death" passes over the Israelite community in route to striking dead all the firstborn among the Egyptians [see Exodus 12 and Joshua 5:9-12]].

the covenant by freeing them, feeding them, and now they were to earn their bread from the sweat of their brows and the fertility of the land.

While the younger son in Luke's Gospel is selfish, greedy, and rebellious, the elder son has done all things well — "Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders." The elder son does not want to have anything to do with the household, the younger son, or the celebration. The Pharisees — like the elder son — stand at a distance and judge the entire gathering of Jesus and his company of sinners. The father recalls to his elder son that they have always been together, and in love have shared in everything. "You were never lost," the father tells him, "but your brother was dead and gone, but now he has returned."

There is always the welcome back of God. Jesus is expressing that God never separates from even the worst sinner. The father had gone out each day to see if the younger son had come to his senses, and the son had done just that. Sitting with the pigs and their messiness, the son looks around, smells around, and wakes up. Remember, pigs, to the Jewish religious sensitivities were the worst things with which to associate. The young boy talks himself back to his truest identity — that he is a son of a loving father. He makes the very natural statement that he no longer should be any more regarded as who he once was — the son. He rises and prepares to talk his way back into — not sonship — but one who will work for his bread by the sweat of his brow.

The theme of the parable is that Jesus is the Redeemer — and not the Approver or Excluder. The Pharisees are the disapprovers and excluders, and Jesus is putting Himself in direct opposition to them and their ways.

One interpretation of this parable is that each of us combines both sons in our oneness. The elder part of us is ordered, strict, obedient, logical, exact, dutiful, and pleased with our own good works. We have the proper tickets. The younger part of us is inconsistent, envious, wondrous, self-satisfying, independent, and stubborn. We are quite a war within. Our elder-side would like to tie down tightly the younger-side. Our self-righteousness does not want that looser side to be seen by anybody. It wants to appear better than it knows itself to be. The elder-side judges everything it does or thinks, and is quite unhappy with the internal tensions.

The younger-side does eventually come to its senses. The emptiness of trying to build oneself, achieve oneself, indulge oneself renders us senseless about our true self. The emptiness of whatever pipen the young boy lands in moves him up and out and back to his true home. We live in that tension then between the self-righteous and the self-redeemed-by-Christ. Those who live severely judging others are victimized by their own self-centered severity. Those who are forgiven tend to be forgiving of others.

So are we in or out? We are welcomed, invited, embraced — but both sons had to respond freely. It is not easy to be welcomed in when we are a bit outside of ourselves. It is truly humbling to want to be perfect, and yet in order to be admitted into the welcome-home banquet, we have to admit ourselves back into our true, fragmented selves.

Imagine how the tax collectors and other sinners, sitting with Jesus and actually eating with him, heard this parable, and called to the Pharisees, who were also intently listening to the parable, to get real — "Come and have something good to eat with us; you don't need tickets, and if you have to, go ahead and wash your hands." —taken from the writings of Mary Brock and Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

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



WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

There are three characters that Jesus is asking us to examine in the parable of the Prodigal Son [Luke 15:1-3,11-32]. Actually, Jesus is presenting them to us so that we might take a look at ourselves in them. How does each one of these characters mirror us, and/or reflect back to us our attitudes and our condition relative to God? Parables invite us to enter into the actors and see ourselves in them.

The first is the younger son. It's important for us to pay attention to his fundamental condition in which we must see ourselves. The first thing to see is his radical departure from God our Father. When he asks for his inheritance, he isn't just asking for a big sum of money. He is in effect saying to his father: "I'm treating you as if you're dead. And I want to get now what I'm supposed to receive after you're dead!"

How many people do you know who live and act as if God is dead — as if God may as well be dead? Or how often have we had an "attitude" toward God that was awfully close to that? It's an attitude in which they have in effect said to God: "Drop dead. I'm getting on with what I can get out of life as if you don't even exist." If we're honest, we should admit that we have had moments of total disregard for God, and treated Him as if He doesn't exist, as if He were dead.

The second thing we need to see is that when we walk away from God, while at the same time taking everything we can get from Him, we end up in the slop with the pigs. Not only that, but we end up in a state of spiritual poverty — with an unrelieved hunger in our souls that all of the pleasures of this world cannot satisfy, no matter how much we have filled our appetites to the full with what the pigs eat, no matter how much we have wallowed in their slop.

Finally, in order to enter into recovery and overcome our bloated addictions to the drugging effect of this world's narcosis, we must admit that we were wrong. This is the hardest thing in the world for many of our contemporaries to do. Countless numbers of people simply cannot admit that they've done anything wrong. And if they begin to suspect that they're wrong, they redefine what they've done and present it in a way that's not sinful. In other words, they define sin away, redefine reality, and cast their attitudes in new ways such that they don't need to admit they're wrong. The Imperial Self can never be wrong!



It's called denial. All addicted people live in denial the way pigs live in slop. They simply tell themselves that the slop smells like perfume and anyone who says that it is slop is an idiot and a fool.

In Luke's parable, this younger son somehow came to his senses and began to recognize the truth. It was then, and only then, that he was able to come back into touch with reality and recognize that he could trust his father to forgive him, and that he needed to go and openly admit to his father that he was wrong and ask for his father's forgiveness. This required humility — along with faith, hope, and courage. It required a radical overthrow of his previously held attitudes and convictions. It also required that he would have to overcome his Imperial Self's denial and surrender; he would have reject his own independence and accept dependence upon his father's love.

Do you realize all of this is required to make a good confession? Perhaps that's why not many people go to confession these days. Too many people are looking for cheap grace. Too many people are looking for a cheap and easy way of tossing off a superficial "I'm sorry" to God so that then they can return to their old ways — ways which in effect treat God's love so cheaply that they might as well tell God to drop dead, that maybe they'll pay more attention to Him when they die.

Next, we need to pay attention to the elder brother — the one whose righteousness was cold, hard, and even bitter. Like many of the Pharisees who knew Jesus, they resented the generosity of God's love as it was manifested in the life and attitudes of Jesus. They resented his generosity in forgiving

wise man who told us forgiveness and reconciliation are the oxygen of Christianity.

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

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — APRIL 19th:

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.**

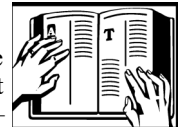


Our Savior Lutheran's Food Pantry was formed to serve those in emergency situations and/or with on-going need in the cities of Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Highland Heights and Gates Mills. The Food Pantry respects social and cultural diversity and upholds the worth and dignity of those it serves. 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.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE AN ALTAR SERVER or LECTOR?

We are resuming our need for Servers and Lectors. Each and every week, we always are finding that we have a need. 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 [440-473-3560].**

HONORING AN ABUNDANT AND PRODIGAL GOD:

There's a disturbing trend within our churches today. Simply put, we are seeing the embrace of our churches become less-and-less inclusive. More-and-more, our churches are demanding a purity and exclusivity not demanded by Jesus in Gospels. Indeed the very word "inclusivity" is often glibly dismissed as being part of the "I am spiritual but not religious" ethos — as if being inclusive were some kind of light-weight, New-Age, thing rather than a central demand within Christian discipleship itself.

What does it mean to be inclusive? We can begin with the word "Catholic". The opposite of being "Catholic" is not being "Protestant". The opposite of "Catholic" is being narrow, exclusive, and overly selective in our embrace. The opposite of being "Catholic" is to define our faith-family too-narrowly. "Catholic" means wide, universal. It means incarnating the embrace of an abundant and prodigal God whose sun shines on all indiscriminately — the bad as well as the good. Jesus once defined this by saying: "In my father's house there are many rooms." God's heart is wide, abundance, prodigal, and universally-embracing — a heart that takes care to pray for those "other sheep who are not of this fold". To be "Catholic" is to imitate that.

In the Gospels we see that Jesus' passion for inclusivity virtually always trumps his concern for purity and worthiness. He associates and dines with sinners without setting any prior moral conditions that have to be met to before those sinners are deemed worthy of his presence. His disciples, much like many good sincere church-people today, were forever trying to keep certain people away from him

WHERE ARE WE AT IN ALL OF THIS?

The story is told about a soldier during combat. He was drinking heavily and was a constant menace to his comrades. His commanding officer had put him “on the carpet” several times, but on this occasion he was ready to throw the book at him. Said the colonel to his lieutenant: “I have given him every break.” The officer responded “Sir, you have punished him, and it hasn’t worked — why not forgive him?” The colonel accepted the advice, and called the soldier in: “I have punished you many times. Punishment has not worked. This time I am going to forgive you. Your many offences will be removed from your personnel folder.” The soldier, who had expected a court martial, broke down and wept. More to the point, he never drank again.

This was probably the first and perhaps last time the commander acted in this merciful and indulgent fashion. However, such a procedure luckily for us is standard operation procedure on the part of God. Jesus’ parable clearly underlines this point [Luke 15:1-3,11-32].

Throughout the years, this story has been called the parable of the Prodigal Son. Prodigal the son was with his inheritance from his father, but so have been countless other sons. But what does not happen often is that this son was totally forgiven by his father. And there was much more than forgiveness — the son was restored to full honors in the family hierarchy. Despite the son’s expectations, the father spoke not one word of reproach against his younger child. It was Andrew Greeley I believe who said that this parable might be better called the “Parable of the Crazy Father”.

Luke’s Gospel contains three “lost and found” parables; for many people, these three parables sums up of the entire Gospel of Luke — it is at the heart of the wonderful message that the Christ came to preach. The parable father, in Christ’s mind, is clearly a type for God Himself. What is emphasized in the parable is the father’s awesome love for his son even though he really deserves nothing more than hot tongue and cold shoulder. The father knows well the know-it-all boy is primarily coming home because he is hungry and needs a place to live. That he has wasted his money is of no importance to the father.

The Master then is telling us that God will forgive even the worst sinner among us unconditionally. All we have to do is start walking back to God. Like the prodigal son, our motives may not be the purest. Nor do we have to even finish the journey. God is quite willing to meet us before our trip is finished. He will bring us to honors which we humanly speaking do not deserve. Obviously, God merits the label “this tremendous lover”. As William Bausch puts it, God is among the very few who stoops to conquer.

Abraham Lincoln, William Barclay tells us, was asked by a journalist how he would react to the rebels after hostilities ceased. Immediately the President answered: “I will treat them as though they had never been away.” President Lincoln must have reflected on this parable often.

The elder brother knew that his father’s heart was breaking over his missing son. Why had he not gone out in search of his brother if for no other reason than to give joy to his father? The elder brother is, of course, a type for ourselves. He had absolutely no sympathy for his brother. Had he had the opportunity, he would have tarred and feathered his younger brother; he would then have run him off the property on a rail.

But his sibling’s misadventures cost him nothing. As the elder brother, two thirds of his father’s estate was legally his. His money was safe and protected. His brother had wasted the third of the estate that was rightfully his own by law. Notice, too, that the older son had an ugly mindset — it was he who suggested that his brother had spent his inheritance on fast women and slow horses.

Lent is fast becoming history. Why not resolve to behave toward sinners as Lincoln did, and not as the elder son? Can we be less patient with others than God is with us? The choice is ours. Recall the



sinners.

But what we should note is that Jesus only forgave those who were truly penitent — those who genuinely admitted that they needed to trust God’s merciful forgiveness, those who overcame their independence, overcame their denial and then surrendered to God’s love. This is something the elder brother could not do. He retained his independence, even giving his generous father a lecture on being too easy with his younger son. You see, for all of the elder brother’s self-righteousness, he remained fiercely independent of his father’s love. He even lived in denial of this own need for his father’s tender, loving mercies.

Finally, we need to see ourselves in the attitude and love of the father. What sort of conditions do we place on our willingness to forgive others? What sort of attitudes do we have in our hearts that put limits on love and forgiveness that put limits on God’s generosity and infinite capacities to bring back the dead into life?

You see, it is the father’s character and attitudes that we should employ to measure ourselves. We need to see ourselves in the prodigal son; we need to see ourselves in the elder brother, but most of all we need to see ourselves in the father. We need to measure the capacities in our hearts and souls to be Godlike in our love, compassion, care and concern in loving others. The parable, you see, is more about the father than it is about the prodigal son.

For us, living as we do in the culture in which we presently find ourselves, the critical aspect to seriously look at in this parable is the point that in order to be forgiven one must first recognize evil and sin, recognize it for what it is, admit to ourselves and to God that we have sinned, and then genuinely go to our Father and ask for forgiveness. This is the critical movement that is so lacking in so very many people’s souls these days. For we are a people who live in great denial.

As Scott Peck wrote in his classic book, *The Road Less Traveled*, we are a people of the lie. We live in lying to ourselves by telling ourselves that sin doesn’t exist, that we have done no wrong, that everybody’s “doing it” and so it is okay. “God will understand,” we tell ourselves, and thus absolve ourselves from the need to admit anything to Him. That’s called denial — and it’s holding far too many folks these days in its seductive and addictive grip. Consequently, they live trapped lives far removed from that which will give their souls the food for which they hunger and the strength that they can derive from it to live lives in genuine freedom.

For what God our Father wants for us above all else is to walk in the glorious freedom of the sons and daughters of God. And to prove it and give it to us, He sent us His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Go to Him and ask Him to help you ask your heavenly Father to give you that food for which your soul hungers so much. Search out and find the freedom the younger son found in the prodigality of his father’s heart. For his father is our heavenly Father.

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

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 szaniszlop@gilmour.org**



WHEN PIGS ARE EATING BETTER THAN YOU:

God is doing whatever it takes to bring us home. God is even willing to use the tragedies and mistakes of our life, to bless us and to lead us to growth. There's an African story about a local tribal king, who had a very good friend from boyhood. The two would regularly go out hunting together. The king's friend was resolute in his conviction that no matter what happened, good things would come from it. Despite many doubts to the contrary, he continued to believe that all things worked for the good. One day when the king and his friend were out hunting, the king's gun jammed and it blew off his thumb. It was a terrible tragedy. The king was deeply shaken. But his friend in typical style said: "Don't worry, good will come from this."

Now this so angered the king, and in a rage he sent his friend to prison. A couple months later the king was out hunting again in some rather dangerous territory. He was seized by a group of cannibals, who tied him and prepared to eat him. But just before they began, they noticed that his thumb was missing. Being superstitious, they believed that they should never eat anyone who was less than whole. So, they untied the king and set him free.

Realizing what had happened, the king repented that he had treated his friend so poorly. The loss of his thumb had indeed saved his life. So, the king went to the prison and apologized to his friend. "You were right," he said, "I should never have put you into prison. That was a terrible and unjust decision."

The friend, in typical fashion, said: "Yes it was, but good came from it."

"Good?" the king said, "what possible good could come from my decision to put my friend in prison?"

"Well," said the friend, "had you not put me in prison, I would have been out hunting with you and the cannibals would have eaten me!"

Even our greatest disappointments can lead to blessings. Even our most foolish decisions can lead to growth. This is what we as Christians believe. We do not believe that is the way the world is. We believe that is the way God is. God is doing whatever it takes to bring us home. That is why for a Christian, despair is never a final option. Even if we have rejected our father, squandered our inheritance, and find ourselves feeding slop to hogs. Even if the person we love the most has been taken from us. Even if we have lost our health or our reputation. Even if we have made disastrous decisions and sinned so grievously that, like the prodigal son, we feel that we are no longer worthy to be God's child. Even then, God is doing whatever it takes to bring us home.

Therefore, the next time you have to face evil in the eye, the next time that you realize what a mess you have made of your life, the next time you know that the pigs are eating better than you are — do not despair. Turn around and start home. The way back may be crooked and difficult, but it is a road that has been prepared for you. Do not forget that when you come to the end of that road, you will not face rejection — only welcome. You will not encounter a cold shoulder — only a loving embrace.

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

**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**



ourselves from the banquet of God's love. For example, we might have a good friend or a close relative who was gravely hurt by a spouse or a child. We hurt with them. Then the offender returns, and, to our dismay, is forgiven and welcomed back. We think: "That is ridiculous. He did that to you and you are letting him back into your heart?" we protest. Our friend says: "Can't you just be happy for me?" But we won't. And we remove ourselves from the banquet of Christ's joy.

Finally, the part of us that gives a little credence to the thought that the forgiving father was all too forgiving is that part of us that is so selfish it considers every action as it impacts on ourselves. It takes courage and a commitment to Jesus Christ to say that my pain is not important — the pain of others is what matters. That is what Jesus did on the Cross. That is what He calls us to do when He says: "Follow me."

Our God loves us. No sacred book other than the Bible proclaims the love of God or a god for his people. The prophet Hosea predicted that the people would luxuriate in the Love of God. And then Jesus came. His whole life was a statement of Love — love for the Father, love for us. His death was a proclamation of this love. "Is this enough for you?" he asks the mystic Julian of Norwich. He was saying: "If you need more, I will do more." Of course, it is enough. We live under the mercy of God, under the compassion of God. We live in the Love of Jesus Christ.

The parable of the Prodigal Son, Forgiving Father, or Elder Brother — whatever — is calling us to reflect on the depth of our own commitment to the Lord, and our own determination to live His Love.

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

NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:

Blessed Basile Moreau was the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, to which Fr. John and the Brothers at Gilmour belong. We have two booklets with Novenas to Blessed Basile Moreau. One is used for a personal intention or healing; the other is used when praying for the intention or healing of someone other than yourself. The Novenas were composed by Father Thomas Looney, C.S.C. Many have received blessings and healings through the intercession of Blessed Basile Moreau, and now we want to extend this invitation to you and your family.

Please see Father John and he will be glad to give you the booklets.

**ATTENDANCE:**

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a Registration Form [name, address, phone number, children, etc.] indicating this fact, if you have not already done so. Such information not only helps us to know who is attending Our Lady Chapel; it also is of great assistance to us in record keeping [for our friend, the IRS] of any contributions which you may make.

ENVELOPES:

- When you need a **new supply** of envelopes, please feel free to take a supply of them from the table in the vestibule, or call Father John at the Campus Ministry Office [473-3560].
- When you **use** your envelope, please make sure that **your number** is on it. If you need to know your number, please call the Campus Ministry Office. Thanks.

WEEKLY OFFERING:

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 [3/22/25] _____ \$ 775.00

Total Offerings: Sunday [3/23/25] _____ \$ 210.00

THE PRODIGAL SON AND BEYOND:

Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son as sometimes called: "the Parable of the Forgiving Father" [Luke 15:1-3, 11-32]. I have even heard the last part of the parable referred to as the "Parable of the Elder Brother".

When we call the parable "the Prodigal Son", we focus on the younger brother. We consider his sins, his memory of his life with the father whom he offended, and his decision to return back to his father even if he were only to be treated as a servant instead of as a son. There are many, many times — we are all sorry to say — when we have felt the way the prodigal did on his journey back home. There are times that we all have recognized our sins, recognized how happy we were before we got mired in our own selfishness, and decided to do all we can to return to at least a small portion of that happiness. We are not seeking to be restored to mystic ecstasy. We just want to be on our father's farm again, happy to be in His Presence, no matter how limited that Presence might be. And then we are welcomed back with more love, more joy, than we could have ever expected.

When we focus on the Forgiving Father, we recognize that the father was not concerned with how He was offended; he was concerned about his child who was lost — lost from the father's world. We focus on the father's joy at seeing His Son approaching and seeking forgiveness. We are ecstatic that our Father wants to restore us to His Love and forgives us before we can even spit out our "Bless me Father for I have sinned."

Our consideration of the Elder Brother usually leads us to recognize that the Father's forgiveness of the sinner has to be embraced by all. When we decide that someone should not be restored to the Father's love, we are in fact excluding ourselves from the Banquet of Love.

But the call of Jesus invites us to go deeper. There is something sinister at foot within us. There is a part of us that gives a bit of credibility to the other side — after all, the younger son had a right to his inheritance. Was it really so wrong that he asked for it early? What he did with it was his business. Or we might think that the elder son had a great point — he's been the good one, working to support his father. Why shouldn't he be upset that his brother, who caused his father so much pain, should return and be welcomed so warmly? There is a part of us — squirreled away in some hidden hole of our brain — that in similar circumstances wants to say: "Good riddance to bad rubbish." We might even question the actions of the Father, thinking that he caused the heartache by giving in to the brat. Now he was going overboard in welcoming him home. Some part of us wants to say that real people would never do that. That's the part of us that thinks we have a right to hold a grudge.



Those thoughts occur to us to the degree that our commitment to Christ is weak. They would not occur if we were totally sold out for the Lord. The parts of us that think that the prodigal son had a right to demand his inheritance and do what he wanted with his money, are those parts that don't consider our own responsibility for the gifts of Love we have received from the Lord. The prodigal saw no obligation towards love or even justice, and, as one of our teenagers said: "He ditched his father." When we decide it's time to take care of "Number One," we are consumed by our own selfishness. But if we are grounded in the Lord, we will use whatever gifts he has given us to praise Him with our lives. Our inheritance is Jesus Christ. He gives us His Love so that we can give this love to others.

Those parts of us that think the elder brother was correct are also those parts of us that are not fully committed to Christ. Justice had been served. The elder brother still owned the rest of the farm — "Whatever I have is yours," the father told him. He wasn't told to give a portion of his share of the farm to his brother — he was just asked to welcome the sinner back into the family. He couldn't because he was not grounded in the Lord's love. Nor are we when we become so judgmental that we also exclude

BATHROOM DRAMA:

It's embarrassing when someone walks in on you when you are on the toilet. You could be at a friend's house — or even worse, at a restaurant or something. Wherever you are, this is usually how it goes — You'll be sitting there enjoying that heavenly peace that comes over you when you do your business. You'll hear the commotion of people outside, and you are paralyzed with fear. The panic rushes through your veins: "Did I lock the door?"

Someone will twist the doorknob, and you'll yelp out something desperate like: "No! No! No! No!" or "Somebody's in here." Either way, you feel stupid because your silly response is really a confession that says: "Yes, I am stupid and ugly and gross. I couldn't spend a half second to lock the door because I needed to take a dump so bad!" The awkwardness doesn't fade. Even ten minutes later, you are terrified to even leave the room for fear of facing the world. Those first few steps out of the bathroom are as scary as anything else in life.

Other times you'll be smooth, and yell something cool: "This one's taken!" "There's not room for two of us!" "Whoa there poopy pants!"

If you say any of those three, your quick wit and confidence tells the other person that they are impatient and desperate. They have the problem — not you. When you're done with the delivery, you can strut out of the stinky room and still feel cool. You conquer awkward situations, and you do it with finesse.

Why do I bring up this bathroom drama? Well, you never know how you will react in a random situation. We like to believe that when put in difficult situations, we'll do the right thing. Here's one that I can't forget. While I was in college, I went on a Life Teen mission trip to Mexico. It had been a life-changing week, and I was excited to be back home to tell my friends about the journey. I was eating lunch with some friends at my sister's apartment, telling stories about our adventures south of the border. Her boyfriend perked up when he heard his truck start outside, then squeal away. He blurted out: "Somebody's stealing my truck!"

We exchanged a quick glance and then jumped up from the table and ran out the door. My friend chased after the truck, and I ran the opposite direction through the parking lot. I sprinted barefoot on the hot summer asphalt hoping to beat them to the gate. It was a long way to run and my feet were hurting. I made a quick turn and cut through the bushes to the gate. The truck stood ten feet in front of me, engine revving, leaning in against the gate as it slowly swung open. I had enough time to do something, but I didn't do anything. I stood at a safe distance and watched them drive away.

That night has replayed in my head a thousand times. I've watched dozens of movies that had the same scene, but the guy smashed out the window and grabbed the robber out of the seat. Or he'd hop in his own car and chase him down. I had a chance to do something heroic, but I failed. I cannot forget that.

So I've decided to make up for being such a coward. I cannot be a hero in big decisions unless I am a hero in small decisions. I figure that each day, there are over fifty times when we face the same choice: Do I follow the world, or do I follow Jesus? I don't have to worry about all fifty at the same time — just the one in front of me. In giving up my vanity and focusing on Jesus, I will be prepared to be a hero when the big challenge comes again. I just hope that the next challenge doesn't involve a bathroom or a stolen truck.

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

FAITH EDUCATION — SCHEDULE:

Meeting dates for April are 6th, 13th, and 27th. 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.



BE RECONCILED TO GOD:

One of the more interesting things in Luke's Gospel is the parable of the prodigal son [Luke 15:1-3,11-32] — it is such a human story! Many human emotions and desires that we know so well are clearly set out. The so-called prodigal son wants to leave home, wants to go his own way, and wants independence from the family. This is something most of us have experienced — and it is an entirely natural, and even laudable, thing. Where the prodigal son goes wrong is that he uses his newfound independence to reject the values which his parents had spent so much effort trying to help him to acquire. Perhaps he felt life at home was unnecessarily restrictive — he wanted freedom and the ability to make his own choices.

This desire to leave home, and to set up on one's own, is totally normal and is absolutely necessary. But unfortunately it is often motivated by naive assumptions and wrong-headedness. Frequently during the teenage years children feel that the parents no longer love them, and that they are being unnecessarily restrictive. They don't recognize that the changes are going on within themselves — and not that their parents — are acting differently — “You're cramping my style,” or something like it is a phrase we have perhaps often heard on the lips of our children. But, of course, it was on our lips long before it came to be on theirs.

It is part of the human condition that we feel the need to make our own mistakes. Frequently this is the only way we can learn. The task of the parent is to give the child such a good grounding in life — and in Christian values — so that when the break occurs, the mistakes that the child makes enable them to learn, but without being so spectacular that they ruin their lives in the process.

Easy for me to say, but not so easy to do.

The story of the prodigal son — or daughter — is about good parenting — it is about the parent giving the child a good grounding in moral values in a suitably protected environment, but also, when the appropriate time comes, about giving the child the necessary freedom to make their own life choices. And, of course, it is about being there for them — always ready to welcome them back into the family when things go wrong — ready to forgive.

This parable of the prodigal son is not only about good parenting — it is also about being a good child. It tells us about the one who went off gallivanting around, doing his own thing, and wallowing in a life of debauchery — and how he came to his senses. The important thing that this young man learned was that there is no shame in returning home. He had the courage to make that decision, and not to cut himself off from his family even more.

The older brother is also an important person in the story; there is a lot to be learned from him. Staying at home and being dutiful is one thing, but to do so with a hardness in one's heart is quite another. The older son needed to learn to be unselfish and generous, and not to feel that his compliance had somehow earned him credit. In some ways this brother, although apparently obedient and dutiful, was actually more selfish than the prodigal son. And we might be tempted to judge him more harshly because his selfishness was hidden.

Our story is, however, primarily about reconciliation. It is, after all, a parable — a parable about the limitless love that God has for us — whether we identify with the prodigal son or the selfish older brother.

God is the very best of parents — he is the very best of fathers and mothers. He is constantly there for us. His heart is ever open and full of love. He sees all we do, and his unseen hand protects us from our worst excesses. He gives us all the independence we crave for and need. He opens his treasury and



gives us more than our share when we want to launch out on our own. And he is there waiting to welcome us into his arms whenever we are ready to return to him.

The most beautiful line in the story is the one that says: “While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity.” This describes perfectly the relationship God has with us. Even when we are far off, God is there waiting for us — waiting to welcome us. His heart is moved with pity for the condition we have allowed ourselves to get into. He waits with longing for us to return and to experience his forgiveness.

In the Church, Christ has given us the sacrament of reconciliation — that wonderful sacrament which expresses God's love and forgiveness for us. In Holy Week we will be celebrating this sacrament together at our Lady Chapel in a Service of Reconciliation [on Monday, April 14th at 7 PM]. To take the words of Luke's Gospel, it is only right that we should celebrate and rejoice because in the sacrament of reconciliation we who are dead because of sin are restored to life — we who are lost are found.

Let us always recall the words that St. Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth [2 Corinthians 5:17-21]: “The appeal that we make in Christ's name is this — be reconciled to God.”

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: Isaiah 65:17-21, John 4:43-54

Tuesday: Ezekiel 47:1-12, John 5:1-16

Wednesday: Isaiah 49:8-15, John 5:17-30

Thursday: Exodus 32:7-14, John 5:31-47

Friday: Wisdom 2:1-22, John 7:1-30

Saturday: Jeremiah 11:18-20, John 7:40-53

5th Week in Lent: Isaiah 43:16-21, Philippians 3:8-14, John 8:1-11

HEARING AIDS:

It is a longstanding joke in my family that my father began to lose his hearing around the time that his three daughters became teenagers. His ability to focus on the morning newspaper — even as my sisters and I barricaded ourselves behind cereal boxes so that we wouldn't have to look at each other — was impressive indeed. I can see now that selective hearing might have been necessary to his survival amid sisterly squabbles and adolescent angst. Whatever our circumstances, we all have experience at closing our ears to unwanted messages — particularly if they disrupt our peace, challenge our thinking, or call us to dismount from our comfortable perch and get involved. We appear to hear, but we do not hear — or to put it another way, we hear, but we do not obey.

In the biblical language, “to hear” is literally “to obey”. But in our modern lives, the two are quite often divorced — just like the people of Israel, we stop up our ears against God's command to walk in his ways and choose our own direction.

The natural consequence of our failure to listen is that God leaves us alone in the stubbornness of our hearts. It reminds me of something that George Eliot once said: “And certainly, the mistakes that we mortals make when we have our own way, might fairly raise some wonder as to why we are so fond of it”.

For those who have ears to hear and to obey, God offers us the best of his love. Let us respond by heeding his call and walking in his ways.

—taken from the writings of Betsy Cahill, which appear on the internet