

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

**~ Prayer of a Yearning Heart ~**

How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O LORD of hosts!  
My soul longs, indeed it faints  
for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh  
sing for joy to the living God.  
Even the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may lay her young,  
at your altars, O LORD of hosts,  
my King and my God.  
Happy are those  
who live in your house,  
ever singing your praise.  
Happy are those whose strength is in you,  
in whose heart are the highways to Heaven.

O LORD God of hosts,  
hear my prayer;  
give ear to me, O God.  
O God,  
look on the face of your anointed.  
For a day in your courts  
is better than a thousand elsewhere.  
I would rather be a doorkeeper  
in the house of my God  
than live in the tents of wickedness.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
he bestows favor and honor.  
No good thing does the Lord withhold  
from those who walk uprightly.  
O Lord of hosts,  
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

—Psalm 84

**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.*

**ST. ADALBERT SCHOOL SUPPLIES:**

Once again this year, we are assisting the students at St. Adalbert School with their school supplies. The following items are needed: **#2 Pencils, Mechanical Pencils, Crayons, Colored Markers, Glue Sticks or small Glue Bottles, Single-Subject Spiral Notebooks and Loose-Leaf Paper.** Here is how you can be a part of this outreach. Simply shop for items on the list. Kindly **return the items** whenever you come to Our Lady Chapel; we will have boxes in the narthex marked “St. Adalbert.” **If you do not have time to shop, simply place an envelope in the collection box and mark it “St. Adalbert’s” or drop it off in the Chapel office.** Together, we will work and plant our seeds of hope and goodness with their community. Thank you in advance for your generosity and helping the children of St. Adalbert! Contact Patty in the Chapel Office [440-473-3560] if you have any questions. We will be concluding our school supply drive by **Monday, August 25<sup>th</sup>.**

**COUNTDOWN TO THE FEST BEGINS:**

Don't miss **the FEST!** All ages are welcome to spend the day at the 25<sup>th</sup> annual Catholic family FESTIVAL on **Sunday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>** at the **Center for Pastoral Leadership** in **Wickliffe, from 12:00 Noon to 10:00 PM.** The FEST! is a free day of faith, family, and fun, featuring **national Christian artists on the main stage**, including **Seph Schlueter, Ben Fuller, Danny Gokey, and Maverick City Music!** There will be kid-friendly fun: Inflatables, a dog show, water tag, and a BMX stunt show, along with faith-based crafts and activities. There are also special zones for adults, like the **Marc's Moms Station**, and the **Man Cave.** Great displays and information, along with incredible chances to win prizes! Great food, convenient parking, and plenty of giveaways! The FEST! **Mass begins at 8:00 PM.** Join thousands from across the Diocese as we celebrate our faith with an outside Mass followed by an amazing **American Fireworks Display.** All of the many events, activities, displays and directions can be found at [www.thefest.us](http://www.thefest.us) The FEST! is FREE and open to all. It's a great family day. Make plans to come to the FEST!

**FAITH EDUCATION REGISTRATION BEGINS:**

**It is not too early to begin thinking about registering for Faith Education classes which will begin in the fall.** Faith Education is an important part of every young 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. **Please contact Patty or Father John in the Chapel Office for more information.**

**A YOUNG ADULT GROUP :**

A Young Adult group is alive and well at Our Lady Chapel. Their **next meeting will be in mid-August.** The group has been meeting to share some time in faith, and also to support each other in life's journey, as we continue to grow and become the people that God wants us to be. If you are interested and would like to be part of this new adventure, please join us at the next meeting, or contact members Richard Jones, Stephanie Leonor, Joe Gurney, or Edwin Heryak. Of course, you can also contact Father John at the chapel if that would be easier for you. God bless you.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

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

**PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:**

- For Josephine Fernando, who is in hospice.
- For Thomas Noble who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Brother Dan Kane, C.S.C., former long-time instructor at Gilmour, who is under hospice care.
- For Toddy McMonagle, wife of Judge James McMonagle ['62], mother of James ['80] Coakley, and sister of Francis ['67] and Clare ['72] Coakley, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Tara Hyland Zittel ['07] who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Mary DiLisi, mother of Rick ['82], Greg ['83], and Jennifer ['96] DiLisi, grandmother of Tomasso ['16], Jack Michael ['19], and Anna Marie ['22] Solomon, who is in rehab following serious surgery.
- For Andre Polsinelli, who is undergoing treatment for Parkinson's Disease.

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Joseph Toth, husband of Joyce, father of Jeff ['84], Jim ['86] and Jennifer ['94] [anniversary]
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian ['09], Rosa ['12] and Edwin ['17] Heryak, father-in-law of Andy Tran and Matt Orehek, grandfather of Theodore, Benjamin, and Magdalena Tran.
- For Mary Carmen Stafford, grandmother of Gianna ['18] and Vince ['22] Stafford
- For Father Bob Villegas, C.S.C.
- For Father Frank Zagorc, C.S.C.
- For Bret Higgins, father of Jordan Higgins ['29]

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:**

- For the victims of the severe flooding in Texas, and for the first responders.
- For an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine, and the political issues in Gaza and Iran.
- 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.



Take a moment to consider the ways God has revealed Himself to you within your daily life. It could be through time enjoyed with friends and family, an encounter with a stranger, or even just an afternoon in the chapel. Having such a grand conversion moment at my first Steubenville conference made me long for an intimate relationship with God and led me to seek after Him within the daily encounters I face in life. God as a loving Father doesn't leave us after a big conversion moment. He continues to pursue after us in the little moments of life as well.

If you're coming home from a retreat or conference this summer, praise God! Seek him out in your day to day routine. This is only just the beginning. —taken from the writings of Noah Salas, a college student.

**LET THE BLIND SEE:**

There once was a blind man in a parish who came to daily Mass with his wife. One day the priest said something in his homily that really set him off. The priest gave very little thought to the disagreement until he noticed that the man and his wife had stopped coming to daily Mass. The priest called their home and asked if he could come over to talk. When the priest arrived, the man was seated in the living room, while his wife went off to make some tea. The discussion started. The man was very animated. The priest, however, knowing that the man was blind, became distracted, and began looking around the room — looking out the window, checking his watch. It never dawned on him that he had to pay attention to the man — the man was blind. His reverie was abruptly ended when the man shouted: "You are not paying attention to me !" The priest was startled. The blind man could "see" the priest's lack of attention — and the priest began to see the man's pain. The blind man taught the priest how true is the saying: "There are none so blind as those who will not see." Each day is given to us as a gift so that we might see more clearly the presence of God in our world. Where is our blindness, and will we ask God to remove it?



**CONTEMPLATION:**

Contemplation — the prayer beyond words and ideas — is a way to describe what Jesus did in the desert. It is not learning as much, as it is unlearning. It is not explaining as much as containing and receiving everything — and holding onto nothing. It is refusing to judge too quickly, and refining your own thoughts and feelings by calm observation and awareness over time — in the light of the Big Picture. You cannot understand anything well once you have approved or disapproved of it. Contemplation is the most radical form of self-abandonment. It is most difficult if there is not a profound trust that there is Someone to whom I can be abandoned! Such self-forgetfulness paradoxically leads one to a firm and somewhat fearless sense of responsibility — God fully "co-operating with those who love God" [Romans 8:28].

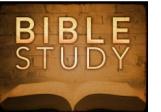
**LIFE IN ITS FULLNESS:**

One of the challenges of living within a highly medicalized society is that it is almost impossible to think of illness without first thinking of medicine, despite the fact that most healing goes on in community via friendships, family, colleagues and so forth. We implicitly or explicitly have a bias towards a model of health that is gauged by the absence of illness and/or the control of symptoms: we are considered well when we have no symptoms and no distress. But for those living with enduring mental health challenges, this means they are always ill! If you and others consider yourself always to be ill, that inevitably limits your expectations.

— John Swinton

**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, JULY 23<sup>rd</sup>:**

**Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, July 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 PM.** Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God's word. It's a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can't come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God's word.



**Our topic: The Mass is a community prayer**

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:**

Sunday, July 20: <b>16<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b> In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, July 21:	<b>NO MASS</b>
Tuesday, July 22: <b>St. Mary Magdalene</b>	<b>NO MASS</b>
Wednesday, July 23:	<b>NO MASS</b>
Thursday, July 24:	<b>NO MASS</b>
Friday, July 25: <b>St. James, Apostle</b>	<b>NO MASS</b>
Saturday, July 26: <b>17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time</b>	<b>5:00 PM</b> In-Person only
Sunday, July 27: <b>17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b> In-Person & Live Stream

**CHAPEL PICNIC — THANK YOU:**

A special note of thanks to all who assisted with the Chapel Picnic. It was a wonderful time, enjoyed by over 70 of our Chapel members and families. Special thanks to Jim Callam and the staff of the Winking Lizard for the delicious meal, and to all of the members of our Chapel community who contributed sides & desserts. Thank you to our Chapel Council members, and Gilmour staff who worked so hard to ensure that everything went smoothly. Thanks to Tina Newton for her beautiful flower centerpieces, for guests to take home! It was a wonderful day. Our next Picnic gathering will be our **Indoor Picnic on Sunday, February 15, 2026.** **Next year's Summer Outdoor Picnic will be on Sunday, July 12, 2026.** Mark Your calendars. Hope to see you there.



**REFLECTION ON THE THEME FOR THE WEEK:**

Love has an urgency to reveal itself, and in doing so it brings about more life and liveliness. God is Infinite Love, and so God cannot but reveal that love and bring about that life and liveliness which is creation.

The Book of Genesis holds many beautiful stories, but none more life-giving than the story of Abraham and Sarah [Genesis 18:1-10]. Abraham and Sarah have been married a long time and have no children. Abraham's call from God was accompanied by a promise that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the heaven and the grains of sand in the sea, but thus far, that promise remains empty. Abraham is having an ordinary day when he has a visit — he is out in the middle of “nowhere” and has been journeying alone for quite some time. Three men appear nearby his tent and Abraham excitedly welcomes them and urges them to stay for dinner.

Much pondering and wondering has been spent on who these three were — perhaps the Lord accompanied by two angels? Abraham was probably at prayer as the visitors approached, but there is movement from prayer to service. Abraham runs and rushes to Sarah to ask her help, then to his son Ishmael to have him select a prized bull for the meal of hospitality.

God had promised that Abraham's obedience to the covenant will result in great numbers of families flowing from his faith. Until now, that promise lay empty. When asked by his visitors where his wife was, Abraham told them that she was in the nearby tent after fixing the meal to which he had invited his guests. One of them affirms that within the next year she would have a son. Sarah who is in the tent hears this and laughs. Much has been written by the Jewish scholars about her laughter. Within the year she gives birth and the Rabbis tell us that this time her laughter fills and blesses the world. Sarah and Abraham, by being trusting even into their old age, had chosen the better part — like Mary in Luke's Gospel — and it will not be taken from them. They had been bought into a life of believing and living that faith. So, there are visitations, conversations, great hospitality — and all within the loving nature of God.

What a wonderful and quite human story we have also in Luke's Gospel [Luke 10:38-42]. Luke's Gospel concludes a long section containing various features of Jesus' way of living and missioning. We have heard about Jesus' determination and single purpose as He made His way to Jerusalem. Those who follow Him must let everything else go — they must be free for their own journeys. The road that we travel is challenging — we who follow must not pass by on the other side of our neighbor who is in trouble. Our neighbor is defined as any brother or sister of Jesus — especially, our neighbors are those we, by nature, would avoid.

On this 16<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time, we find Jesus as a guest of two women — Martha and her sister Mary. Martha is busy preparing dinner, and her sister, Mary, is not joining her busyness — rather she is seated at His feet, enjoying or receiving Jesus. Martha has taken a bad reputation for being busy, and Mary is celebrated for being contemplative. Sarah and Mary have taken the better part which cannot be taken from them.

This too is a love story. While Mary's approach is a validation of the contemplative life, it is not putting down an active life. Jesus has just been encouraging His followers to be quite active in presenting the “King of God.” The Good Samaritan has been celebrated in a parable for his having done good things for his former enemy-turned neighbor. So, there must be something here deeper than the distinction between doing and being.

**ONLY THE BEGINNING — WHY YOUR CONVERSION NEVER ENDS:**

Sharing your testimony can be pretty scary at times — especially when you're a 17-year-old kid talking about Jesus, with sincerity, to friends and family. Talk about scary am I right?! This is a true story. I remember feeling pretty surprised whenever my buddies from school asked me about how my experience was at my first Steubenville conference. It quickly turned into an opportunity for growth in our friendship. Whether it be discussing about my first Steubenville experience with a friend, or even sharing about it in front of peers during my school's chapel for the first time, I remember talking about it all — the worship, the talks, falling on my knees during adoration in front of the Lord on the first night. Overall, my first Steubenville conference played out as a major conversion point for me in my life.

But — that was it. That was all I discussed about when it came to my faith life at the time. My life turned around at the conference and that was it. After placing my life wholeheartedly in God's hands that night, I was ready for the rest of my life to be smooth sailing to heaven. God's going to be there with me all the way.

Fast forward a year later to Saturday night of my second Steubenville conference. I remember finding myself staring up at Jesus during adoration in disappointment, wondering why I wasn't feeling the same way that I felt the last time. I found myself growing in disappointment, longing for that freeing sense of joy that I had experienced previously. I was desiring that so much; I even tried making myself cry while Jesus was being processed around the room, feeling jealous of my buddy who was crying next to me.

I remember thinking to myself: “ok, I gave God my everything the last time. Why am I not feeling the same way unlike last time? Is He finished with me?”

Big Moments are Few. Little Moments Happen Often. When it comes to our faith journey in the Lord, it gets easy to center our entire story around one pivotal conversion moment. It gets easy to compare our experience from our first conversion moment to other events in life — whether big or small. We tend to find ourselves questioning where God is at in our lives the next time we enter into Mass or adoration — or even the next time we go to a retreat or conference.

As life went on for me — post-conversion — I came to realize that there's a lot more that God has for us after the “big encounter.” I had the blessing to serve as a summer missionary at Camp Golden State. One of the fondest memories of my first summer on staff would be the nightly sharing of glory stories. At the end of the day, the missionaries would come together to share where they saw the glory of God throughout the day. This small simple act of sharing where God was within my life throughout the day made me come to the realization that I encounter Him, not just in the big moments, but in the little things that take place in my daily life.

God reveals Himself to us in simplicity. One of my favorite passages of Scripture that illustrates this is when Jesus sits down and has breakfast with his disciples at the end of the Gospel of John [see John 21]. Just like how the disciples encountered our Savior in a moment as ordinary as having breakfast together, God desires to draw us closer to Him in the ordinary moments of our lives as well. He does not just leave us to be after our initial conversion. Our conversions stretch out throughout our entire lives. God out of His infinite love for us desires to meet us right where we are at within our daily lives.

And if you're thinking to yourself: “how can I find him in my daily life?” — remain Open. God will draw you closer to Him as long as you remain open to him. Sometimes God will reveal Himself, and His glory in big ways. However, more often than not, He does this in the little moments of life.



**THE CHOSEN :**

We had a wonderful group of people join us for our initial showing of an episode of *The Chosen* during this past Lenten season. The viewing was followed by a very inspiring sharing among those present. **Allowing for a break for summer months, we will begin again in the fall with a monthly gathering, as we continue the journey of faith together**



*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 1<sup>st</sup> 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. **Beginning in the fall, our series will resume on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month. Please plan to join us on October 12<sup>th</sup>. If you have any questions, please contact Father John or the chapel office [440-473-3560].**

**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. The booklets are on the table in the Narthex of the Chapel.. please take one.

**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 [7/12/25] \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 827.00**  
**Total Offerings: Sunday [7/13/25] \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 437.00**

This is a love story as well, and the Divine Visitor reveals how love works. When I was a young Jesuit, learning to love God, I understood that I would be loving God if I were working as hard as I could. At the end of the day, I would go to the chapel and review all the things I had done that day. I would be doing this while picking at the calyces which were like so many rosary beads. I had physical proof that I had loved God. I would pray this way before going to bed, and so felt quite good about myself. God loved me because I had done good things for God.

There is nothing we can do to make God love us more. There is nothing we can do to force God to love us less. We can do some things to be more and, of course, less aware or involved with that love. Martha is a doer in Luke's Gospel, but Mary represents all of us who are loved, but who also buy into all that Jesus has been instructing His followers to do. The "part" that is "better" and which Mary has chosen is simply Jesus, in His totality. She will move into action because she has bought into the parable of the Good Samaritan and all the rest of the Jesus-movement. Jesus knows how revolutionary His teachings are, and what demands He is making upon His followers. This is still a love story between Jesus and ourselves whom Martha and Mary both represent. Martha is the part of us, which wants to win or earn God's love. Jesus sees Mary as the part of us, which accepts being loved. He looks upon Mary and sees she does accept all that He has been trying to tell humanity about who we are and what we can do to continue the urgency of God's love in this world.

Pick your calyces if you wish, and may they all be earned by sharing God's love and the person of Jesus, because you have chosen the better part — being part of this love story.

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

**ADVICE ON CHRISTIAN LIVING:**

In Luke's Gospel, Martha welcomes Jesus into her home and is busy providing hospitality for him while her sister, Mary, sits at the Lord's feet listening to him [Luke 10:38-42]. Upset with this situation, Martha wants Jesus to tell Mary to help with the serving. Jesus replies: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

Christians today hear this story in some questionable ways. A sister who identifies with Mary feels affirmed in her self-righteous conviction that she has chosen the superior vocation by living the vows in a religious community. A busy mother of four kids, who identifies with Martha, interprets the words of Jesus as somehow demeaning her chosen life as a wife and mother.

Accepting the scholarly view that the gospel does not favor the contemplative life over the active life, let us reflect on what Christ is telling those of us who identify with Martha and her frustration over being unfairly burdened with work. As the Gospel suggests, the Martha problem is not solved simply by reducing the workload. Jesus does not tell Mary to pitch in with the domestic chores. He does indicate that we can best deal with work related anxiety by adopting the perspective of the disciple who reflects on his words. This might mean: making persons more important than completing tasks; seeing work as a way of extending the kingdom; maintaining a contemplative spirit in the midst of demanding activities; staying calm and centered despite stressful demands; doing all for the glory of God.

We can imagine individuals responding positively to this Gospel. A wife long frustrated by her husband's adamant refusal to share in household work comes to accept this reality, and with a calmer heart offers up her daily tasks as a prayer for the good of her family. A bricklayer who is forced to work with a much slower partner learns to manage his understandable frustrations by thinking of his own work as building God's kingdom on earth. A busy executive having trouble dealing with stress starts doing ten minutes of reflective prayer each morning which keeps him calmer throughout the day.

How can you maintain a more contemplative spirit during your busy workdays?

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

**WHO IS YOUR “FAVORITE JESUS?”**

On this 16<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time, Luke’s Gospel tells the story of Martha and her sister, Mary [Luke 10:38-42]. As Jesus tries to navigate the bumpy road between the life-style of Marth and Mary, an interesting question arises — in Jesus’ place, what would you have said to Martha? What would you have said to Mary? I know what I would have said: “People are like snowflakes, no two are alike.”

Probably Martha and Mary had seen snow — it is mentioned often enough in the Old Testament. They certainly knew it was white, and that the melting snows in the mountains were important for the spring harvests. But the idea of snowflakes not being alike? Well, it’s a nice psychological idea, but the Gospels aren’t about psychology. Still, the image helps us to see how Martha and Mary related differently to Jesus.

So, the psychological point has very important spiritual consequences. Have you ever noticed that when you think of Jesus — outside of liturgy or personal prayer — you tend to think of him a certain way? Possibilities include: The Baby in Bethlehem; the 12-yr-old who stayed behind in the Temple; Jesus Crucified; Jesus Risen; Jesus in the Eucharist; Jesus teaching; Jesus condemning hypocrisy; Jesus forgiving; Jesus associating with sinners; Jesus healing; Jesus feeding the multitude — the ways are endless.

We all have a “favorite Jesus.” This is why there are four Gospels — each is a portrait of the “favorite Jesus” of the Evangelist or of the community for which the Gospel was written. Each one has a different “take” on Jesus. Paul’s “favorite Jesus” emerges from his writings, too. We see something similar in the Old Testament. Abraham had unique relationship to God. So did Moses; so did the Prophets.

The way you relate to Jesus says more about you than him. The way you relate to Jesus isn’t coincidence — it’s faith. Not just THE faith — it’s YOUR faith. In a sense it’s your vocation. So, which Jesus is your favorite?

There is a proverb that says: “Tell me who your friends are, and I’ll tell you who you are.” I would paraphrase it to read: “Tell me who your favorite Jesus is, and I’ll tell you who you are as a disciple, and as a Christian.”

Follow THAT Jesus, and you will be true to YOUR faith, to YOUR vocation, and to yourself.

—taken from the writings of Father René Butler, M.S., which appear on the internet

**SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — SAT. AUGUST 16<sup>th</sup>:**

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

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

**Please let us know in the Chapel office [440-473-3560] if you would like more information or if you would like to help.** This is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

**LIVING HOSPITALITY:**

After I saw the movie *High Noon* at the age of 12, I found myself for a least a day and a half trying to walk like Gary Cooper. I probably wasn’t alone. Movie heroes normally engender imitation. That’s why the most popular motion picture hero of all time is *To Kill a Mockingbird*’s Atticus Finch. Almost everyone would like to imitate this fictitious hero’s unprejudiced personality.

The imitation of heroes didn’t start with movies. Our sacred authors utilized this concept thousands of years ago. It’s behind many of our Genesis readings [Genesis 18:1-10]. The writer depicts Abraham and Sarah as ideal Jews — demonstrating characteristics which good Israelites are or should be noted for. Today the focus is on hospitality.

Though the three strangers come at a most inappropriate time — siesta — Abraham doesn’t wait for them to ask for hospitality. He rushes over and begs them to “let” him take care of them. Then, with Sarah’s help, he “picks out a tender, choice steer” and prepares it for them with all the side dishes. By the way, while some Scripture scholars believe that these three are the Trinity, they probably are just a manifestation of God in human form — a unique entity that no one human being can represent.

In a world in which there were no hotels or restaurants as we know them today, travelers depended on people’s hospitality for survival. Our biblical writer reasons that if Israelites are God’s Chosen People, then Israelites must mirror God’s concern and care for all people. And Abraham and Sarah certainly mirror that care and concern.

The sacred author even tells us about the reward Abraham and Sarah receive for their generous hospitality — “One of the strangers said: ‘I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son.’” Sarah’s barrenness is over. The Lord will demonstrate the same generosity with this couple as they demonstrated for the three travelers.

This isn’t the only time in Scripture that hospitality is given an unexpected reward — Luke’s Gospel provides us with another classic example [Luke 10:38-42].

We can never forget that Luke revolves much of his gospel around a journey Jesus and his disciples take from Galilee to Jerusalem. They — like the three Genesis visitors — are also travelers, frequently dependent on people’s hospitality. Here, the sisters Martha and Mary offer Jesus a meal as he’s passing through their village. He not only accepts — he spends the time while the food’s being prepared in teaching his good news.

Then, when Martha complains that her sister is listening to his teaching instead of helping with the cooking, he rewards them for their hospitality by gifting them and all women with something which in their culture only men were expected to possess — the ability to engage in the “better part.” They, like men, could be full disciples, fully listening to and carrying out Jesus’ teaching. For Luke, no longer were there “women and men’s activities.” This evangelist — more than the other three — could be labeled a radical feminist.

One really doesn’t know what to expect when one offers hospitality to others. And, for the author of Colossians, that offering is ongoing. It never stops. “Filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, the church” is always part of every Christian’s ministry.

Just as Abraham, Sarah, Martha and Mary discovered a totally new direction in their lives when they gave themselves to others, so we, following their example have no idea what to expect when we imitate their example. No wonder our ancestors in the faith found life so exciting.

Maybe we don’t have the right heroes if we’re living boring lives today.

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



gospel strikes greater fear into my heart than this one. Why? Well you know the story. Jesus goes to the home of the two sisters — Mary and Martha. Mary sits at his feet to listen to his words while Martha is responsible for all the tasks of hospitality. However, when Martha comes to complain and ask that Mary help her with the work, Jesus sides with Mary, saying that she has chosen the better part and it shall not be taken from her.

Why is this so dangerous? Because I know that there are Marthas all around us —and you and I might very well be one of them! They are the workers of the world. They are not only women, but men as well. They are the first people to say “yes” when you have a need. They are willing to roll up their sleeves and get things done. They take pride in their work. They do not complain. They ask for little in return. Often, they do not even expect a thank you. But if they ever did ask for a helping hand, if they ever humble themselves enough to say: “Would you assist me?” and someone were to dismiss that request as lightly as Jesus did to Martha in Luke’s gospel and instead point to some sweetie laying on the couch contemplating the mysteries of life and say: “She has chosen the better part,”—well you wouldn’t want to be there. It would get ugly.

So, I know that you Marthas are out there. I know when you heard what Jesus said, your jaw began to tense. When Jesus sided with Mary, you said: “Huh! He’s sitting in a clean house, eating a hot meal. How does he think these things are going to happen if everybody chooses the better part?” I know that you Marthas have already written Jesus off — Son of God, or not: “That man doesn’t get it.” And I recognize that your eyes are now fixed on me. You are waiting to see whether I will agree with Jesus or not. If I do, twenty-five years of experience tells me, I’ll hear about it.

I hope you can recognize my dilemma. My job is to agree with Jesus — it is what I signed up for on ordination day. But, on this issue, I understand what the consequences will be if I do so. So, here’s my plan. I have scheduled my vacation for this week. And I am going to give this homily and get out of town.

This is what I think Jesus is saying: “Martha, Martha, I deeply appreciate the work that you do, the committees you chair, the service you render, the meals that you cook, the hours you labor. I know the world would not function without your energy and skill. But I love you, Martha, and so I need to ask this question. Do you know that there are things in your life more important than work? Do you know that as valuable as it is to give to others, you also need to take for yourself?”

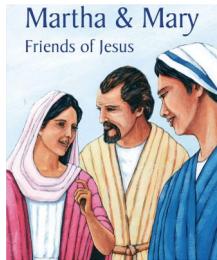
“Do you understand that along with all the time you use, there must also be time that you waste, time when you set aside all your responsibilities and have some fun? You need time to think about questions with no practical purpose — such as, why bees are attracted to flowers, or whether God is male or female, or when was the last time you laughed so hard it made you cry. You might think that such questions are trivial and a waste of time. But they are an opportunity to embrace the mystery of life.

“I do not want you to stop working, Martha, but neither do I want you to lose yourself. I love you, Martha. You need to know that I love you not for the things you do, but for the person you are. You are ‘the better part’ — the part that must not be overlooked or forgotten. I want you to realize how valuable, how precious you are to me.”

Marthas, that is what I think that Jesus is saying. Not that your work is unimportant, but that it is not everything. Not that we do not deeply appreciate what you do, but we want you to realize how important you are. Therefore, you have the right to take time for fun, to take time to think and pray, to set aside time to waste. All of these “Mary things” are a part of life. Jesus wants to be sure that they are a part of yours.

That is what I think Jesus is saying. And now that I have agreed with him — I’m out of here!

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



## MARTHACIZED MARYS:

I and other priests will often mention that one of the most humbling experiences that we have is celebrating the sacrament of penance. People come and seek forgiveness for their sins, and the priest acts as the intermediary with God for them. At the same time, the priest cannot help but admire the people’s determination to live the faith to its fullest.

A particularly humbling experience for the priest is when the penitent speaks about his or her prayer life and notes that he or she missed morning or evening prayers. It is wonderful that we have people who are adamant to cultivate a daily prayer life. What is humbling for us as priests are the questions of how often and how well we pray every day. Priests have an obligation to pray for you — our people. Our homilies need to flow from our prayers.

Many priests will say: “I’m so busy. I say my daily office — the Liturgy of the Hours. That is required. But I have a hard time for much more.” Well, if a priest can give that excuse, how much more can a mother or father with little children at home and, for at least one of them, a job to maintain to support the family? The children have school, activities, and then there is homework that often involves Mom or Dad’s help. Parents have a responsibility to volunteer to maintain their children’s programs. There is the constant, “Ma, Dad,” at home.

And, yet, the Lord says in Luke’s Gospel: “Martha, you are busy about many things. Mary has chosen the better part” [Luke 10:38-42].

Senior citizens who are retired have the luxury of being able to make time to be alone with the Lord on a regular basis. So many of them take this very seriously. And we all benefit from the graces they win for us. These seniors may no longer be holding a job, but they are working for the Lord and His people. Through their prayer life, they are sustaining the rest of us. Still, our seniors often find themselves distracted by events around them. And, of course, there are health issues to tackle. There are doctor appointments, and just plain bad days physically. Sometimes our seniors feel that they are being pulled in so many different directions that they wonder if they are more like Martha than Mary.

Let’s take a little deeper look at that Luke’s Gospel. We can understand Martha’s frustration. Jesus shows up with at least twelve disciples. They will all need to eat. The food is not going to prepare itself, and Mary is being no help. Similarly, you might say to me: “What, I should not take care of my children, or my sick spouse, and instead go off someplace to pray? That doesn’t make sense.” You are right.

What we need to do is not separate the work of Martha and the prayers of Mary — we need to combine them. We should become Marthacized Marys. For example, a young father once said to me that he finds it difficult to make time for prayer. The children have so many needs. I mentioned to him that I am sure it is no little chore getting them ready for bed, having night prayers with them, and telling them a story when they are little. I told him to let those night prayers be the beginning of your prayers for your children, and continue them even after your children get older. When they are little and fast asleep, I told him to consider praying in their rooms with the background music of their sleeping.

We are rightly concerned about people texting while they drive. But there is something worse than texting. Ladies, please don’t put on your makeup while you are driving. I know you are doing that. That’s why there are big vanity mirrors on the driver’s side. How about, instead, praying while you drive? Why not have rosary beads in your car? If your work is more than fifteen minutes away, you’ll



have time to say a rosary. Or maybe put on a religious station on the radio? Basically, there are things that even a busy person can do to cultivate a daily prayer life.

I have a luxury as a priest that most of you do not have. I can schedule daily prayer in the morning, while you might be busy with taking care of children, making breakfast, etc. If you can make a bit of a prayer schedule for yourself, do so — and keep it. If you can't, then at least make the morning offering. When you wake up and wash up, give God your day, and ask Him to walk with you through all the developments of the day. When we walk alone in the world, we don't do so well. But when we walk with the Lord — well, I, we, can do all things in Him who strengthens us [see Philippians 4:13]. The morning offering helps us make the entire day a prayer.

But why? Why do we need to pray every day? We need to pray because we live, as Sheldon Vanaukin writes in his autobiography, *A Severe Mercy*, we live under the mercy of God. We are dependent on God to give meaning and purpose to our lives. We recognize that the only real peace we have in our lives is the peace that comes from Him and flows back to Him — the Peace that only He can give. We need to pray because we need to adore Him. We need to pray because we need to thank Him for His many gifts. We need to pray because we always need to seek His Forgiveness. And we need to make our petitions to the Lord: prayers for our family, our marriages in your case, priesthood in my case, prayers for the sick we know, prayers for those suffering throughout the world, prayers to end the horrible events we have blasted to us in the news every day — horrible things such as sex trafficking, starvation, disease, people being denied human dignity, and so forth. We need to pray for the struggles we have in our jobs and for the struggles our children have. We need to pray for those in our families who have left the nest and now must make their own way in the world. There is much for which we need to pray.

The Lord is one of us. He shares our human nature. He understands how we can get so tied up by the demands of the day. He also knows how much we need to spend time with Him. If we can find time to be alone in silent prayer, we should treasure this time. But if we can't, we shouldn't give up on daily prayer. After all, we don't have to choose between being Marthas or Marys. We can be Marthacized Marys — people who pray through the events of our day.

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

## DYING INTO LIFE:

Most of us probably grew up thinking that the Resurrection was a one-time miracle about Jesus — an anomaly that proved he was God. But Jesus' resurrection is really a statement about how reality works — always moving toward resurrection. As the Catholic funeral preface says, "Life is not ended but merely changed." This is the divine mystery of transformation, which is entirely evident in the physical universe.

Resurrection is not a miracle as much as it is an enduring relationship. The best way to speak about the Resurrection is not to say: "Jesus rose from the dead" — as if it was a self-generated miracle — but to say: "Jesus was raised from the dead" — which is what the scriptures actually say. The Eternal Christ is thus revealed as the map, the blueprint, the promise, the pledge, the guarantee of what is happening everywhere, all summed up in one person so we can see it in personified form.

Death is not just physical dying. Rather it is a going to the full depth of things, hitting the bottom, beyond where you are in control. And in that sense, we all go through many deaths in our lifetime. These deaths to the small self are tipping points, opportunities to choose transformation. Unfortunately, the vast majority of people turn bitter and look for someone to blame. So their death is indeed death for them because they close down to growth and new life.

But if you do choose to walk through the depths — even the depths of your own sin and mistakes — you will come out the other side, knowing that you've been taken there by a Source larger than yourself. Surely this is what it means to be saved. Being saved doesn't mean that you are any better than anyone else; it means you've allowed and accepted the mystery of transformation, which is always pure gift.

## THE GIRL WHO CHOSE FAITH ABOVE ALL ODDS:

We are inundated with media that tells us to live a life contrary to the values of our faith. We are told that happiness is achieved through popularity, money, success, fame, sex, and material wealth. Sometimes it is easy to be consumed by our culture — to try and fill that void in our hearts with clothes, parties, relationships, or sex. Or perhaps we begin to believe the lie that "I would be happy if...." — if I was skinnier, if I had more friends, if I was more athletic, if I was a better musician, or if I was funnier.

It is easy for our eyes to become fixated on ourselves; we compare ourselves to everyone else, and suddenly, our eyes are no longer focused on the cross — on Jesus. We so quickly forget that He — and only He — can bring us true happiness, fulfillment, and peace.

Yes, it can be very hard to live a life of an authentic Catholic in our society today — especially as a young person. Even if our family supports us in our faith, it can often feel as though we are alone on this journey. But the reward for those who fix their eyes on the Cross — who choose to put Jesus above all else — is great. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus says: "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life" [Matthew 19:29].

One young woman, who would later become a saint, was familiar with the challenge of living an authentic, Catholic life, despite facing opposition from her friends, family, and culture. We celebrated her first just this past week — July 14<sup>th</sup>. She is the first Native American saint. St. Kateri was born in 1656, in the Mohawk village of Ossernenon. In 1660 a smallpox outbreak swept through the Mohawk village, killing Kateri's mother, father, and brother. Kateri survived the disease, but was left with scars all over her face and impaired vision. Now an orphan, Kateri was sent to live with her aunt and uncle.

Around the age of 11, Kateri befriended Jesuit missionaries. The Jesuits exposed Kateri to Catholicism, and over time Kateri developed a deep devotion to the faith. As Kateri grew older, her aunt and uncle made arrangements for Kateri to be married — as was the custom for their culture. But Kateri refused. Instead, to the shock and disappointment of her tribe and family members, Kateri requested to be baptized Catholic.

On the feast of the Annunciation — at the age of 23 — Kateri vowed to live as a Bride of Christ as a virgin forever. Father Cholonec, a priest who knew Tekakwitha, wrote that she said: "I have deliberated enough. For a long time my decision on what I will do has been made. I have consecrated myself entirely to Jesus, son of Mary. I have chosen Him for husband and He alone will take me for wife."

Kateri's life was filled with suffering. She was an anomaly among her Mohawk village, and yet, she loved Jesus with her whole heart. When Kateri was 24-years-old, her health began to decline. On April 17, 1680, Kateri died. Her last words were "Iesos konoronkwa" — "Jesus, I love you."

Do we live our life in a way that shows people we love Jesus — even when it is difficult, even when we are misunderstood? Let us ask for the intercession of St. Kateri to give us the courage to follow Jesus without reservation.

—taken from the writings of Caitlin Sica, a youth minister.



## A MESSAGE TO MARTHA:

Luke's gospel is perhaps the most dangerous passage in all of the scriptures [Luke 10:38-42]. I have been a priest now for over twenty-five years and I have had to speak on many touchy issues. But no

**THE BURDENS WE CARRY:**

The Psalmist wrote: “I kept my sin secret and my frame wasted away. Day and night your hand was heavy upon me” [Psalm 32]. This psalm is a piece of very good psychology about the burdens we carry within us — our unforgiven sins.

When we don’t face our faults, our problems, our weakness, our angers, our sense of inadequacy — worse, when we blame them on others, or deny them, or need to be perfect, or become defensive — we refuse to accept ourselves. Every doctor and psychologist in the country sees the effect of that in their offices every day.

We all have things that we need to forgive in ourselves — or face in ourselves. We have things we know we ought to ask forgiveness for from someone else, but pride and stubbornness hold us back. These things become a barrier between us and the community — a hot stone in the pit of the stomach, and a block to real happiness. But nothing is going to get better until we face them.

Forgiveness occurs when we don’t need to hold a grudge anymore — when we are strong enough to be independent of whatever or whoever it was that so ruthlessly uncovered the need in us. Forgiveness is not the problem — it’s living till it comes that taxes all the strength we have.

Some people think that forgiveness is incomplete until things are just as they were before. But the truth is that after great hurt, things are never what they were before. They can only be better or nothing at all — both of which are acceptable states of life.

“Life is an adventure in forgiveness,” Norman Cousins said. You will, in other words, have lots of opportunity to practice. Don’t wait too long to start, or life will have gone by before you ever lived it.

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

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

- Monday:** Exodus 14:5-18, Matthew 12:38-42
- Tuesday:** Song of Songs 3:1-4b, 2 Corinthians 5:14-17, John 20:1-2, 11-18
- Wednesday:** Exodus 16:1-5, 9-15; Matthew 13:1-9
- Thursday:** Exodus 19:1-2, 9-11, 16-20b; Matthew 13:10-17
- Friday:** 2 Corinthians 4:7-15, Matthew 20:20-28
- Saturday:** Sirach 44:1, 10-15; Matthew 13:16-17

**17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time:** Genesis 18:20-32, Colossians 2:12-14, Luke 11:1-13

**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].

**LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST:**

In Paul’s letter to the Church at Colossae, he speaks about a mystery — “a mystery that has been hidden for ages is now manifested to God’s Holy Ones. The mystery is this: Christ is in you” [Colossians 1:24-28]. Usually when we use the word “mystery”, we think of a story that has an ending we try to solve before we get to the last page of the book or last five minutes of the movie. When the Church uses the term “mystery”, it goes much deeper. For the Church a “mystery” is a truth that is incomprehensible to the reason and knowable only through divine revelation. The Early Church referred to the sacraments as the mysteries. When adults are about to come into the faith they are anointed with the Oil of Catechumens so they may have the strength and the grace to be open to Mystery. The main events of the action of Jesus Christ in our world is called the Mystery of Faith. At the most solemn time in the Mass, after the Bread and Wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, we are called upon to proclaim the Mystery of Faith, and we respond something similar to: “We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.” Paul, therefore reminds the Colossians and us that we have received Mystery — the Mystery that Christ is in us.

Sadly, when it comes to this Mystery many people, and many times we ourselves, are clueless. We go about our day, so busy that we overlook the purpose for our actions. We overlook the reason for our being. We forget about the presence of Christ. Like Martha in Luke’s Gospel, we are concerned with doing instead of being. Martha was busy doing this and that in her valiant efforts to prepare for Jesus. Mary, her sister, was concerned with being, with being with Jesus [Luke 10:38-42].

A number of years ago, someone came up with a great idea as a guide for making decisions. The idea was WWJD — What Would Jesus Do? People still wear wrist bands with WWJD to remind them to choose the course of action that Jesus would choose. I think that is wonderful. But I want to propose an even better guide. Instead of focusing on Jesus out there somewhere, focus in on the presence of the Lord right here, right now, in your lives, in that of your family and others, in the Church, in the world. WWJD is wonderful, but even better is: WIJSWM — What Is Jesus Saying Within Me. This is the mystery that St. Paul is speaking about. Jesus Christ is here. When we are attuned to the presence of the Lord, we will force ourselves to consider if a particular action or inaction will strengthen or weaken the Divine Presence.

For example, sometimes people will say: “Well, the Church says this or that, regarding some situation or other, but I disagree.” Well, it is not a matter of what the Church says — it is a matter of the presence of Christ. It is not merely a matter that the Church says it is wrong to get drunk; it is a matter of considering what this action is doing to the presence of Jesus in our lives. A wise young priest once said to me: “A good way to judge whether an action is moral or not is to ask yourself whether or not you can pray better after the action.” Interesting — and true. If after a course of action, we find prayer difficult, then we have probably have driven the Lord out of our lives, or at least we have diminished His presence.

We need to pray. We harbor, we treasure the presence of Christ within each of us, within our homes and in our community. We need to make time every day to recognize this presence within us. We need to stop and hear the Lord in the silence. We cannot allow the many concerns of our lives to hide the only thing that matters — the presence of Jesus, His presence within us, His presence in those we love, and His presence in those who reach out to us. We cannot allow anything to dull this presence — His Presence.

When we make the time to be in His presence — when we join Mary of Bethany in just enjoying the Lord in our lives — we will find ourselves walking a road less traveled, a road of serenity in the middle of hectic activity. When we choose to nurture the presence of the Lord within us, we, like Mary, will be choosing the better part.

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

**BEING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD:**

Hospitality, presence, and being personally attentive. All of these are qualities of character that should be a part of our living in relationships with others. The Scripture Readings for this 16<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time bring out the theme of hospitality — hospitality in the sense of personal presence, an openness of heart that allows guests into the inner home of our hearts and souls. In my years of pastoring souls, I have come to recognize that the way we treat others is the way we treat God, and the way we treat God is the way we treat others. The Gospel account of Martha and Mary [Luke 10:38-42], along with the Old Testament account of Abraham meeting God in his three guests [Genesis 18:1-10], give us an occasion to examine the notion of personal presence to others, and our personal presence to God in Jesus Christ.

Abraham, as you may remember, felt that God was absent from him. After Abraham's initial experience with God we find him now in his old age. Unable in her younger years to have a child, Sarah now in her old age was obviously sterile. Yet Abraham was constantly aware of God's promise that he would be the father of a nation of people dedicated to God — a nation as numerous as grains of sand along the shores of the world's oceans [see Genesis 22:17]. Abraham was also painfully aware that God's promise was hardly able to be fulfilled, now that he and his wife Sarah in their old age are unable to have children. For Abraham, God did not seem to be present. How could God's promise of numerous children possibly be fulfilled?

The remarkable thing about Abraham was the fact that, in spite of the seeming failure of God to respond to him, in spite of all of the catastrophes and misfortunes he and Sarah had met, in spite of all of the sufferings they had endured, Abraham was still actively searching for the presence of God in his life. He had not given up. He had not been defeated by apparent failure. He was still a pilgrim and a disciple of God. His mind still searched the events of his life for traces of the finger of God writing on the shifting sands of his life's history. His eyes and his soul were still waiting for the hand of the Lord to give an indication of the presence of God. It was because of this persisting faith that Abraham in his hospitality was able to perceive the presence of God in the three strange men who suddenly appeared in his life. Christians are able to see in them a veiled foreshadowing of the Trinitarian God — the God who said let us make man in our image and likeness [see Genesis 1:26] — and also a veiled foreshadowing of the three Wise Men from the East who point to the presence of God in our lives [see Matthew 2].

Presence is a quality of soul, a character trait, a habit of mental alertness, an openness of mind that allows us to integrate our lives and our very selves into the lives and selves of others. It is a prerequisite for intimacy and it is an essential characteristic of discipleship. It is this that Mary chose and that Martha did not understand. Presence means making space for an other in your soul, for the person and spirit of another to be whom they really are for you to admire, respect, and for you to receive with hospitality. This demands the active awareness and the mental and spiritual attention of the disciple, the host, the student, or the friend.

Some people allow others to come deeply into their presence only upon set pre-conditions. The other is allowed into that inner circle of deep awareness only if the other will meet our requirements or fulfill our needs. Discipleship, on the other hand, just as friendship and the intimacy of love, is unconditional. Martha was all too concerned with the social requirements of polite hospitality.

Another practical application can be discerned in the way family members treat each other. Sometimes I've watched couples talk at each other rather than really listen to each other. While one is



attempting to communicate, and the other is only half listening, all the while trying to think of the most compelling response to make. TV talk shows are good examples of that. The talking heads only talk at each other. Sometimes husbands and wives talk at each other as if they knew beforehand what the other was going to say without hearing what was really being said. Parents can treat their children that way, and children sometimes treat their parents that way. There's no true presence, no real understanding — only hidden agendas that each side compulsively seeks to get out in the discussion.

Presence means withdrawing part of one's self in order that the other can fill in the space created by that self-withdrawal. Attentive presence is real hospitality — the sort of hospitality that allows the other to enter and be healed of the wounds of isolation and loneliness. It is a hospitality that is unconditional and total.

Hospitality is a virtue — a strength of soul that should perdure through all of one's life. It cuts through any categorizations of others. Just as religion is not merely a part of one's life but rather one's life is a part of religion, so also presence and hospitality are states of mind that should be found in all of our relationships with others. Sometimes we think of hospitality as a virtue that we will haul out of storage only when we have to endure the presence of another. We sort of offer it up to God as a cross we must carry when we are obliged to deal with a person whom we consider to be unpleasant. Genuine discipleship helps us overcome that sort of categorization because through discipleship we develop a mental habit of always trying, like Abraham, to discern the hand of God working throughout the whole of our lives. We should always be talking and listening in the presence of the Lord — trying to see Him in the mysterious strangers who come into our lives, trying like Mary to be receptive without conditions and without any attempt to meet our requirements hidden within us.

Hospitality, presence, and being personally attentive — all of these are personal qualities that are a part of our living in relationships with others. They are essential to living in relationship to God. The critical question you must face and I must face is how welcoming am I to God? How conscious am I of His presence in my life? How personally attentive am I to God's presence, power, and love in my life?

You and I should be challenged by these questions. Out of love God made us to love — not only each other but above all to be open to and accepting of His love — and to love Him in return. Hospitality isn't simply "nice." Being personally attentive to God each and every day is essential — something far more profound than good manners.

We may feel we are too busy to pay much attention to God. What if God had the same attitude and was too busy to pay much attention to us? How we treat others is an indicator of how we treat God. Something for us all to ponder.

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

**COMING TO GRIPS WITH FEAR:**

For many people, the most prominent motivating force in life is fear. Many of us feel it daily. It may manifest in small increments in our everyday lives — we feel afraid of failing at our job or being abandoned in a relationship. Or overwhelming anxiety may immobilize us as we realize our mortality or fear the potential harm that might come to us through violence; we may feel a free-floating terror that emanates from an unknown source. Just as shame engenders our mistrust of ourselves, fear feeds our mistrust of other people, the life process, even God.

—Christina Grof

**REMEMBER:**

God has committed some work to me which he has not committed to others.