

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

~ **A Prayer for Direction** ~

O loving God,  
we thank you  
for bringing us  
the rivers and streams of this world.  
May the rivers we know  
be an image of the stream  
that you want to flow  
within each one of us.  
Teach us now,  
take away all fear,  
dare to let us believe  
that we could really be  
a small part of a reconstructed society,  
that we could build again.  
Take away our own cynicism.  
Take away our lack of hope.  
Take away our own anger  
and judgments.  
We thank you  
for the faith  
and the desire  
that is in our hearts.  
You have planted it there.  
Now help us to preserve it,  
protect it  
and increase it.  
We long for vision, good God.  
We need vision  
and we know we will perish without it.  
Help us open each new day  
to a new meaning,  
to a new hope,  
to a deeper desiring.  
Show us your face, loving God,  
and we will be satisfied.  
We ask for this  
in all the holy names of God.  
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 FEST IS NEXT SUNDAY:**

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 time to start 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.

**KEEPING THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE:**

Life is precious — each and every moment of it is cause to celebrate. If we can learn to embrace the joys and the sorrows together, we can see how in losing we will find. We will learn we can celebrate at a wedding as well as a funeral — we can learn to cry and rejoice at both. When we are born, we have the ability to breathe and move about on our own; but it has been exchanged for the security and safety that we experienced in our Mother's womb. In marriage two people gain a new relationship and new life, but lose some of the special bond and connection with their parents. Life changes — things are lost and gained. All of our moments — whether success or failure, gain or loss — when embraced with the love of Jesus Christ, enables us to truly celebrate and appreciate each precious moment we have been given. We will clearly see purpose; there is nothing to fear in loss; but we are filled with a hope and a joy, through Christ of what is to be gained. Let's celebrate today!! **O Lord, I thank you for the fact that you remain the same in my life — Your steadfast love never comes to an end. Help me today, Lord, to embrace Your love in all that I experience — joy and sadness. I thank You for my life, and for the fact that it is You who always sustains me. Each and every moment of my life is a gift from You. You are the source of all that is precious. Amen.**

**NOT OWNED BY THE WORLD:**

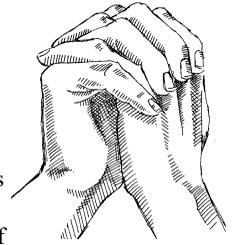
God does not require our success, popularity, or power in order to love us. Once we discern our identity and accept God's unconditional love, we are free to live in the world without being owned by the world. We can forgive those who hurt or disappoint us without letting bitterness, jealousy, or resentment enter our hearts. The most beautiful fruit of claiming your belovedness is a joy that allows us to share God's unconditional love with others. Strange as it may sound, we can become like God for others

**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.
- For Mary Vislosky, who is critically ill with pneumonia.
- For Mary Thesing, mother of Father Mark Thesing, C.S.C., who is seriously ill.

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Christopher Wilson, grandson of Wayne and Cyndi Frimel [anniversary]
- For Brian Skubovius [anniversary]
- For Father Bob Villegas, C.S.C.
- For Father Frank Zagorc, C.S.C.
- For Bret Higgins, father of Jordan Higgins ['29]
- For William Urankar, brother of former Gilmour teacher, Frank Urankar, and uncle of Stanley ['69], Thomas ['78] and Anthony ['79] Urankar
- For Thomas Ruddock, grandfather of Ann ['98], Caroline ['00], and Brian ['04] Ruddock
- For Sister Betty Scanlon, S.N.D.
- For Luke Skotzke, an NDCL graduate
- For Patricia Coviello
- For Joseph Sandbothe
- For Helen Burns, mother of Mary Jo Burns Clark [GO "75]
- For Sister Patricia Dippel, O.S.U.
- For Thomas Zumbiel ['52]
- For James P. McMullen ['51], brother of Thomas McMullen ['52]
- For Louis Briody ['51]
- For Richard Wirth ['52]

**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.

**HOW TO RELATE TO GOD:**

Fertility cults are a constant problem in Scripture. Prophets condemn them; laws are created to deal with them; and the authors of the Bible warn us not to engage in them. Though most of the passages relating to these rituals are in the Hebrew Scriptures, the beliefs underlying such practices continue to surface in the Christian Scriptures. The name implies that these rites have something to do with fertility — an increase in children, crops and herds. However, the concept goes deeper. Fertility-cult systems teach and practice actions, words and rituals that are geared to control the gods from whom favors are being sought. Many individuals believe if they use certain magic actions and specific secret words in the proper order, and repeat them the correct number of times, the gods will be forced to give them what they want.

But the authors of the Scriptures insist that, at times, God’s answers are as complicated as our questions. The writers come down hard on anyone who attempts to control God instead of relating to Him.

It’s an understatement to say interpersonal relationships are complicated. Married couples quickly discover that it’s far easier to control than to relate. Some actually give into the temptation, and spend their marriage in the control mode.

The readings for the 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time were written for people who have given up control, and are trying to relate with God — even in those moments when they’re attempting to get something from Him.

Abraham’s relationship with God [Genesis 18:20-32] opens the door for negotiations over how many “innocent” people must be found in Sodom and Gomorrah before God will spare those cities from destruction. Not lost on the original readers is the understanding that the “outcry” which God is investigating revolves around the practice of fertility cults. The moral is that “relating” accomplishes more with God than “controlling.”

St. Paul, in his letter to the Church at Colossae [Colossians 2:12-14], zeroes in on the most basic truth of early Christianity — long before “confession” came into existence, the Apostle teaches, our sins were forgiven because the person who committed those sins is no longer alive. That person “died” when he or she became one with the risen Jesus.

The new person who came into existence at that point is not responsible for the dead person’s transgressions. God doesn’t forgive us because we can successfully maneuver our way through a sacred ritual, but because we’ve merged with the personality of Jesus — the new creation in our lives.

In Luke’s Gospel [11:1-13], Jesus presumes our relationship with God and His relationship with us must be before our eyes whenever we pray. Though experts agree that Luke’s version of the “Lord’s Prayer” is older and more original than the one Matthew gives us, even here the petitions are surrounded by Jesus’ assurance that God isn’t playing a game of “Red Rover” with us. We don’t have to say the proper words to get what we want.

If human parents and friends can be moved to action because of their relationship with us, so can God.

But notice what God gives — the Holy Spirit. We can never forget that the Holy Spirit is the force in our lives that tells us what to ask God for in the first place.

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

**ANCIENT WISDOM:**

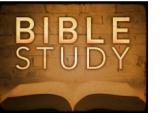
When you arise in the morning, think of what a precious privilege it is to be alive, to breathe, to think, to enjoy, to love.

—Marcus Aurelius



**NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6<sup>th</sup>:**

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



**Our topic: 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 27:<br>17 <sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time    | 10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream |
| Monday, July 28:  | NO MASS                          |
| Tuesday, July 29:<br>Sts. Martha, Mary & Lazarus              | NO MASS                          |
| Wednesday, July 30:   | NO MASS                          |
| Thursday, July 31:<br>St. Ignatius of Loyola                  | NO MASS                          |
| Friday, August 1:<br>St. Alphonsus Liguori                    | NO MASS                          |
| Saturday, August 2:<br>18 <sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time | 5:00 PM In-Person only           |
| Sunday, August 3:<br>18 <sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time   | 10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream |

**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>.



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

There is this human tendency we all have of avoiding persons and experiences which make us feel bad about ourselves. The opposite is true as well. For example, overweight persons do not easily look at themselves in a mirror, nor do they take advantage of stepping on scales. The more-shapely can spend much time doing both. We all desire a more positive experience of ourselves, but seem to always have a certain something or someone who can bring us back down to earth.

Transferring all of this to the Eucharist, let us ask ourselves how we feel when we are actively attending the Eucharist? Or how do we experience ourselves upon entering the Church space before Mass begins as compared with how we feel upon leaving. Faith is not a feeling, but the central mystery of our faith is offered to us as a positive gesture and direct gift to each of us. We can also reflect upon our feelings of joy and/or anxiety toward all those other gifts which God gives us to assist our faith walk.

Abraham reappears again in this 17th Week in Ordinary Time [Genesis 18:16-32]. Recall that last weekend, Abraham had a visit from three special and mysterious persons. Abraham welcomed them, and Sarah, his wife, heard that she, now in her advanced years, would have a son within one year. One of the visitors was the Lord, and the other two are eventually revealed as angels. Now they, along with Abraham, go down or over to the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah, where there has been a whole lot of serious sinning going on. The Lord and Abraham stay at a distance, and Abraham, who apparently is quite familiar with these two sin-cities, makes a quite moving plea on behalf of the innocent. Herein we are rubbing up against the ancient biblical question about individual and communal responsibilities for favor or punishment.

Abraham becomes the first advocate for humanity. There is the great countdown checking out how merciful and just, God might be. Might there be even “ten” just persons? Looking forward down the centuries, we see that One Just Man is God’s eternal answer — “Yes!”

In Luke’s Gospel [11:1-13], we find the friends of Jesus asking Him to teach them the sense of prayer. John was known to have been instructing his followers about the life activities and self-denials necessary to be people of prayer. John’s group was penitential and in great expectation of the Messiah. Jesus lays out in words the personal relationship that He has with the God He addresses as Father. We are more familiar with “The Lord’s Prayer” according to Matthew’s version [see Matthew 6:9-24].

Luke’s presentation is shorter, but the verses which follow deal with an interpretation of just what the prayer means. Note also that when asked to teach his disciples to pray, Jesus does not give instructions about how to stand, hold hands, lower eyes or prostrate. He does not even give lists of words or ideas. Jesus tells them to bless God’s name according to the ancient Jewish forms. Then acknowledge that this most holy God is indeed bringing about holiness on the earth. In humble recognition admit then, that one needs holy-help to bring about that holiness within each individual every day.

For many of us, our image of God rises or falls according to what we receive. God is good on good days, but his stock falls on less good days. We can knock ourselves out by knocking on God’s treasure house of blessings, and fail to be knocked over by what has already been given. Prayer can seem to be something we do to or with an arbitrary and sluggish deity.

But God prays over us, and our prayer then is more than words. Our prayer is being aware of God’s

**A PRACTICAL LESSON ON PRAYER**

Abraham is held as a model for all believers, and we learn from him again as we reflect on his interaction with God. Abraham knows the Lord, and trusts in His merciful heart as he pleads for the hypothetical innocent people of Sodom — a city the Lord is ready to destroy because of their widespread sin. Abraham reasons and persists with the Lord, and the Lord listens to him. We can come to our own knowledge of the depths of the Lord’s mercy when we consider the words of Saint Paul: “even when you were dead in transgressions, the Lord brought you to life along with him [Jesus]” [see Colossians 2:13]. The Lord does not wish harm to any of His creatures, especially us humans, who were made in His image.

While God allows evil — because part of being made in His image is having a will free to choose [or not choose] the good — He will always bring about our good in the end when we persistently seek and turn to Him. As we grow in our relationship with Him, we sometimes might feel like He is not listening to our prayers. We ask again and again, but do not receive what we ask for. But, the Lord reminds us in Luke’s Gospel that He knows better than we do that which we need. He will always give us “our daily bread and forgive us our sins” and the “Holy Spirit to those who ask him” [Luke 11:1-13]. With the Psalmist, let us trust Him and pray: “When I called you answered me; you built up strength within me” [see Psalm 138:3].

—Susanna Spencer

**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 [7/19/25] \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 245.00**  
**Total Offerings: Sunday [7/20/25] \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 322.00**

**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.



impossible, and end up counting the blessings we already have.

There is a very beautiful passage in St. Paul's letter to the Church at Rome that says: "The Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words. And God, who knows everything in our hearts, knows perfectly well what he means, and that the pleas of the saints are according to the mind of God" [Romans 8:26-27]. This is important from a theological point of view. It is not that we pray for what we want; it is that the Holy Spirit prays in us and gives expression to our deepest desires which — because we are disciples of Christ — are in harmony with God's will.

We shouldn't fall into the temptation of thinking that because God knows what we want, we therefore don't need to pray — or, worse still, believing that if real prayer means us tuning into God's will, then there's no point in doing it because God will make whatever it is happen anyway. What we are doing when we pray is sharing in the constant stream of prayer that goes on within the Trinity. This has a profound effect on us — it changes us at the deepest level and makes us holy. Our desires and wishes are transformed, and we find ourselves praying more intensely than ever before.

Yes, intercessory prayer still remains an important component of our prayer life, and we do continue to pray for specific things — especially when other people have asked us to do so. But since we are praying "in the Spirit", so to speak, these prayers become caught up in the internal dialogue of the Trinity that we are share in. The more you pray, the deeper and broader and more powerful your prayer becomes. You might find that you get less focused, but then your prayer-net is being spread wider and wider.

What God wants is to pour out his gifts of grace on his beloved — "How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" What we are being told here is that God's greatest gift to us is himself. In other words, the person who experiences healing as a result of prayer is not moved so much by the healing as by the new awareness of God in his or her life. The person who has something restored to them, or a desire fulfilled, spends their time not so much in relishing the recovery of what was lost as by praising God for his miraculous intervention.

The key measure of authenticity in all this is the degree to which it takes a person away from their own preoccupations and towards a greater love of God. There once was a missionary in North Africa who was very much intrigued by the behavior of a Bedouin. This Bedouin often used to lie flat on the ground in the desert. One day the missionary asked the Bedouin what he was doing. The Bedouin replied that he was listening to the voice of the desert. "What does it say," asked the missionary? The Bedouin replied: "The desert says: I want to be a garden."

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

## 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].**



daily bread of conversation with, around, about, within and directly to us. On behalf of others and their needs, and even just sometimes, those of myself, we all need to become more in touch with an awareness of just how dependent each of us is. God will be God. God's grace invites each of us to be more ourselves. Each of us has needs and we can ask God to take them away, leaving us with the peaceful illusion that we are self-contained and quite independent. We also are very good at praying for things to happen our way, because we are selfish. We pray for the needs of others, because we care. Ultimately, our prayer ends for in a smile, not of resignation, but a more lively sense of our human gratitude.

Going back to Luke's version of the Lord's prayer, we see that Jesus invites those who are relating to God through prayer to admit that they have not lived faithfully. As we are invited into the kingdom, we need also to be forgiven. We will know what forgiveness is, because we forgive others as members of the kingdom. Then we will end by asking to be cared for by God when tempted to leave the kingdom for another.

Luke concludes this presentation by Jesus' telling some pertinent particular situations. Then the famous and perhaps misleading statements that when we ask it will be given, when we knock it will be opened. This is not true literally, sorry to say. Luke presents Jesus as saying something very true and more important. For all the asking humans' do of God, what God desires to give is the Holy Spirit which in times of great need for us can seem second best. The Holy Spirit is given generously to us so that we might be aware and accepting of all the other gifts which lead us to living the kingdom together.

The aspects of this prayer, and that relationship are that God is the essence of holiness. God's holiness is moving into this world and into the human experience. This kingdom is based in God's being pure love, and in time that love will center the kingdom in heaven and on earth. God's love is offered daily — momentarily — as the bread that came down from heaven in the desert. This love-relationship is forgiving, and in the kingdom, forgiveness will be shared. There is another kingdom of evil, and God's love will be given to resist it. Jesus will preach these elements and live them out through His walking our ways in His time.

Luke's Gospel ends with some quite homey references to how friends and parents are so good in giving to their children what is good for them. There is the very attractive idea that if we knock, the door will be opened; if we ask, we will receive. We all have had experiences of the knocking and asking without the response we wanted. Jesus certainly got the attention of those who heard this. He was asking them for the faith He had in the loving providence of His Father.

Many people have asked to be taught about prayer, and how to pray, and a sense of prayer. But the answer to such a request is the realization that prayer is all about learning about oneself. Thus, it becomes almost impossible to teach someone about their prayer — one can hardly explain one's own prayer. Prayer is more than words — it is a relationship which is experienced and expressed as personally as the person praying can be. There is a sense of security offered by saying lots of holy words, and for some that security is good prayer for them. We have to be who we are in any relationship, and that is what Jesus is offering us.

Prayer has to be without expectations. Any human relationship which is held together by high expectations cannot endure. I have found a freedom from learned-expectations about how I "should" feel and "should" respond. I have found myself saying to God at the end of prayer-time: "Whatever You think prayer is — that's what I just did." It solves much strategizing and worrying about whether or not our prayer has value. But the fruit of the prayer-relationship is the prayerfulness with which I experience the day's events. As in any relationship, if all there is, is asking and knocking — well, that sounds like a business. Prayer is being personal without being selfish. I wonder if having a sense of humor has something to do with a sense of prayer.

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

## POINT YOURSELF IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION:

Remember you can't change your past. But you can create your future.

### BARGAINING AS A WAY OF LIFE:

For those of you who have traveled abroad, particularly to the Middle East and perhaps even to the Holy Land, the account of Abraham bargaining with God will not appear to be strange. Haggling is an art form, particularly in a Middle Eastern market. Abraham's intercessory bargaining reveals the value of only one just man's prayers along with the value God places on the life of just one righteous man [Genesis 18: 16, 20-32]. The Jews, you see, have always known that the prayer of just one righteous man holds a lot of value with God, and that the life of such a man is "worth his weight in gold" — as the market place phrase goes. Abraham knows exactly how to bargain with God so that God will spare the people of Sodom for the sake of just one man living there.

Furthermore, the story reveals that Abraham is on good terms with God. One not on good terms with God would ever dare to approach God in this manner. Abraham, however, could. He was not estranged from God. And because he was not estranged, he could bargain and haggle with God in the finest of Middle Eastern business practices. Abraham haggles with the best of them.

Abraham's situation is different from ours. The problem in our day is that we are indifferent. The problem faced by priests, ministers, and rabbis in our culture is not the problem of unbelief. Nor is it necessarily the problem of sin. No, our problem is the problem of indifference. It's not that people are atheists or agnostics. It's not that people have actively rejected God and defied God by sinning. No, it's that people simply don't care. They're indifferent. For them, God does not matter.

If you want to insult someone, the greatest possible insult you can render is to return a gift given to you unused. If you really want to reject someone, send their gift to you back to them. It tells them: "I don't need you. I don't need your friendship or your love — I don't need anything you could possibly give me." In other words: "You are for me a non-person!"

Not to pray is to show your indifference toward God. Not to pray is to send His gift back to Him. Jesus taught us how to pray in the simplest of terms. There's nothing mysterious or mumbo-jumbo about it. The prayer Jesus taught us is utterly simple in its expression of what we need from God and what our response to Him should be [Luke 11:1-13]. It tells us we need to honor Him, that we need our daily bread, that we need forgiveness, that we need the strength to give forgiveness to others, and that we need God's protection in times of temptation and trial. Not to use it, not to pray it, is to say to God: "You don't have anything I need or want."

Prayer acknowledges that you have a relationship with God. Consequently, the quality of your prayer is correlative to the value you place on your relationship with God. Abraham took God seriously — so seriously that Abraham haggled and bargained with God over the value of what was to be delivered. There was something very serious at stake here, so Abraham got serious with God.

Do we take God seriously? Do we need God? I think we should. I think we need a higher power in order to extract ourselves from sinking further into the quicksand as we thrash about, sinking further and further down. I think we need our daily bread — the Bread of Life along with all those daily gifts that nourish and strengthen us. I think we need that which causes us to grow as persons. And I daresay each and every soul will admit they need forgiveness.

If prayer is to change anything at all, it is to change us — to change our minds, to change our attitudes, to change the way we live. Genuine prayer puts us at God's disposal. It allows us to see what God dreamed we could be when He created us in the first place. Ask yourself what is more real, the self you see, or the self God sees? The self that God sees is what we can be — not what we have been, or done, or accomplished. Prayer, in other words, takes hold of God's presence and gives us power over



### THE VALUE OF PRAYER:

Prayer is a vitally important aspect of the life of any Christian. One could say that prayer is the lifeblood of faith — the vital force that gives us energy and moves our faith forward. We have some examples in the Scripture readings for this 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time. Abraham haggles with God about the future of the city of Sodom [Genesis 18:16, 20-32]. You might ask yourself why Abraham is so concerned with saving Sodom since its wickedness was well known. But don't forget that Abraham's nephew — Lot — lives there.

This story gives rise to an interesting religious question about communal punishment. The stress today is on the individual, but in those days, a person's identity came from the group that they belonged to. Then communal punishment and reward was seen as quite normal. Thus, Abraham wants to know whether the righteousness of even a small number will outweigh the wickedness of the rest of the citizens of Sodom. We certainly hope that Abraham has in mind that his nephew, Lot and his household, belongs to the small number of righteous.

But Sodom is eventually destroyed because of the bad intention that the people of Sodom have towards the three messengers of God who are Abraham's guests. Luckily Lot and his family manage to escape — that is except for Lot's wife who disobeyed the command not to look back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

In Luke's Gospel [11:1-13], we find Jesus praying. This provokes the curiosity of the disciples who then ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. Jesus instructs them in the basic elements of the prayer, and what we have is what we know today as "The Our Father", or "The Lord's Prayer". Not only does Jesus teach the disciples the prayer — he also follows up with some instruction on importance perseverance in prayer and the overwhelming generosity of God.

We are often told by priests and teachers not to spend too much time in intercessory prayer — they tell us that we should not constantly ask God for this or that. We are taught that this is just another kind of selfishness. But this is not what Jesus teaches — He urges us to have no hesitation in asking God for whatever we might need, whenever we might need it — "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you."

This presents us with an interesting conundrum — does God respond to our requests by intervening in the world? Surely we all believe in the possibility of miracles. But we generally also tend to believe that such miracles are rare things. Certainly God does intervene in the world in response to our prayers — but we should not think of our prayers as changing God's mind.

This leads to another conundrum — we also are left with the problem of prayer which apparently goes unanswered. As we look at this, we should be very careful to avoid the thought that "God sometimes says 'no' to our prayers" — this is clearly contrary the teaching of Luke's Gospel.

On the other hand, we also need to be very aware that prayer changes us — not God — and then in due course, we find ourselves modifying what it is that we are praying for. Instead of directly asking God that I pass my exams, I begin to ask God for the grace to persevere with my studies, to improve my memory, and to give me inspiration on the day of those exams. What God wants is for us to pray — and the more we pray, the more we transform our thinking into God's thinking. We start by asking for the



## WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM GOD?

“Ask and you will receive” [Luke 11:1-13]. Really? But beware! Jesus doesn’t say what you will receive — only that you will receive. Perhaps our tradition’s first theological investigation of prayer comes in our comes in our Scripture Readings for this 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time. We begin with Abraham sounding like the “all-time bargainer” [Genesis 18:16, 20-32] — can 50 good people save the city? 45? 40? 30? 20? 10? Abraham knew of the sinfulness of Sodom. The real debate is not about numbers. Abraham’s theological complaint was that God was portrayed as acting like a despot — revengefully punishing those who transgressed.

Underneath the question of the innocent suffering because of evil people — a blatant fact of life — Abraham is ultimately asking: “Does evil rule the world? Do the innocent make any difference in the world?” That’s a perennial question — especially sharp in times of war, dictatorship, corruption and the victimization of the weak by the strong. So Abraham puts God on trial: “Should not the judge of all the world act with justice?” This question comes from a belief that God is in charge of everything that happens — God decides and creation, be it people or nature, carries God’s will into action.

Another question like Abraham’s is: “Why bother to pray if God has already written the script?” Or do we believe, as some say, that if we pray hard enough, God will relent in punishment or cure our beloved’s cancer, or make the sun shine for the picnic? Do we really think that prayer functions to change God’s will about hard things that are in process?

Many times, we ask: “What would Jesus say?” In this case, we have an answer in Luke’s Gospel. The disciples ask: “Teach us to pray” [Luke 11:1-13]. Ultimately, this question asks: “How are we supposed to relate to God?”, and “What can we expect from God?” Jesus’ response is simple. Go to God as a child to a parent, trusting in the Father’s love. Also, look around creation, and let yourself be carried away in wondrous awe. Then say: “Hallowed!” Blessed! Overwhelming is your very name!” And then add: “May your desires for creation come true! May your will be done!”

Jesus reminds us that the creator of the universe has given us what we need. “Our daily bread” is a phrase Jesus seems to have invented. More than day-to-day, it suggests something more like the bread of tomorrow, the coming age, the bread that is consecrated by how it is shared and nourishes. If we understand that, then “Give us our daily bread,” offers a different perspective on “Your kingdom come.”

As a grand finale in this prayer asking for the establishment of God’s will, Jesus cuts to the chase — “Forgive us as we forgive.” Is this a tit-for-tat — “You’ll forgive us if we forgive each other?” That hardly sounds like the God we meet in Jesus.

Suppose that this is yet another petition for the establishment of God’s reign? In this case, we might interpret it to say: “Lead us to be like you, seeing possibility rather than injury, believing like Abraham that evil does not have the upper hand.”

Do we really want God’s rule? Then we have to keep badgering those who have the power to make it happen — to feed the hungry, to give children what they need, to rise above retribution, and to value justice and harmony over any kind of supremacy.

At the end of this discourse on prayer, we hear Jesus say: “Ask and you will receive.” Now note that Jesus isn’t promising a bike, a cure for cancer, a safe pregnancy or anything like that. No, what Jesus promises is that if we ask — and apparently only if we ask or allow it — God’s Spirit will be with us.

For what should we pray? How can we relate to God the Father as Jesus did? The woman who taught Jesus to pray gives us the same answer he does — when you pray say: “Behold, I am your servant, do with and in and through me according to your will” [Luke 1:38].

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



ourselves — not over God. Prayer gives us the chance to see ourselves in God’s eyes, and therefore to live with self-respect, to leave in peace, and to live with the power not only to change ourselves but also the power to heal, love, and free others so they can see themselves in the same Light of God. Prayer liberates us.

In his letter to the Church at Rome, St. Paul put it beautifully when he wrote: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship/daughterhood. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God and creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God” [Romans 8:14-17].

Do we need the strength, the fortitude, and the guts to forgive someone in our lives who has deeply wounded and hurt us? You bet we do. Do we need to have the willingness to forgive others? Yes! For each one of us there is someone in our lives who has hurt us so much that only an act of God can give us the will and the power to forgive them.

Are we held in the steel grip of habit and addiction, or a particular temptation that conquers us and snatches away our soul every time it afflicts us? Are we threatened by something terrible that will hurt us — by an evil that seriously threatens our well-being? Everyone here knows that is so in some aspect of their life. We all know that we have been tried and found wanting. We all know that when we face that trial again we will succumb unless the power of God comes to us and helps us out of the quicksand that sucks us down ever more deeply and ever more powerfully to the point that we will suffocate in it.

The Mass we celebrate is in itself a prayer. Not to pray it is to show God our indifference. To turn Sunday Mass into something that is only optional is to tell God that for us He is only optional. And as for the value of only one Righteous Man, Jesus, — well that’s precisely why we come to Mass, together offering His life for ourselves and others to the God of Abraham.

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

## PROTECTING GOD’S CHILDREN:

The Diocese of Cleveland’s “Protecting God’s Children” program is a continuing effort to instruct and inform everyone about the protection of children from sexual abuse. To report any past or present suspected inappropriate behavior toward children by priests, deacons, religious, lay ecclesial ministers or personnel associated with the Church, please contact the Diocesan Response Service Office at (216) 334 -2999 or via email at [response\\_services@dioceseofcleveland.org](mailto:response_services@dioceseofcleveland.org). You are also asked to immediately inform local authorities about inappropriate behavior.



## 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.



**DON'T WORRY:**

A pastor had been on a long flight from one place to another. The first warning of the approaching problems came when the sign on the airplane flashed on: Fasten your seat belts. Then, after a while, a calm voice said: "We shall not be serving the beverages at this time as we are expecting a little turbulence. Please be sure your seat belt is fastened."

As the minister looked around the aircraft, it became obvious that many of the passengers were becoming apprehensive. Later, the voice announced: "We are so sorry that we are unable to serve the meal at this time. The turbulence is still ahead of us."

And then the storm broke. The ominous cracks of thunder could be heard even above the roar of the engines. Lightning lit up the darkening skies, and within moments that great plane was like a cork tossed around on a celestial ocean. One moment the airplane was lifted on terrific currents of air; the next, it dropped as if it were about to crash.

The pastor confessed that he shared the discomfort and fear of those around him. He said: "As I looked around the plane, I could see that nearly all the passengers were upset and alarmed. Some were praying — the future seemed ominous, and many were wondering if they would make it through the storm."

Then, a little girl became noticeable. Apparently the storm meant nothing to her. She had tucked her feet beneath her as she sat on her seat; she was reading a book, and everything within her small world was calm and orderly.

Sometimes she closed her eyes; then she would read again; then she would straighten her legs — but worry and fear were not in her world. When the plane was being buffeted by the terrible storm, when it lurched this way and that — as it rose and fell with frightening severity — when all the adults were scared half to death, that marvelous child was completely composed and unafraid. The minister could hardly believe his eyes.

It was not surprising therefore, that when the plane finally reached its destination, and all the passengers were hurrying to disembark, the pastor lingered to speak to the girl whom he had watched for such a long time. Having commented about the storm and behavior of the plane, he asked why she had not been afraid.

The child replied: "Because my Daddy's the pilot, and he's taking me home."

There are many kinds of storms that buffet us — physical, mental, financial, domestic, and many other storms can easily and quickly darken our skies and throw our plane into apparently uncontrollable movement. We have all known such times, and if we are being honest, we will have to admit that it is much easier to be at rest when our feet are on the ground than when we are being tossed about a darkened sky.

Let us always remember that Our Father is the Pilot. He is in control and taking us home. Don't worry.

**SAVING SODOM:**

The Reading from the Book of Genesis for this 17<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time is one of my favorite passages in all the scriptures. It describes Abraham interceding before God on behalf of Sodom, lest it be destroyed [Genesis 18:16, 20-32]. I do not know of any other scriptural passage that more succinctly defines our relationship to God and the importance of prayer. The narrative unfolds like a drama — perhaps even like an extended comedy routine with increasing tension.

Abraham has a strategy [Genesis 18: 18:16, 20-32]. If he can get God to agree to spare Sodom for a certain number of just people, he can push God to reduce the number. Abraham succeeds in persuading God to spare the city for fifty just people. But, knowing that it would be difficult to find fifty good people in Sodom, he keeps lowering the number. He moves from fifty to forty-five, then forty, then



Twenty-third Psalm a mere 118 words. Should we not follow suit? Perhaps God is telling us that He is not appreciative of long winded prayers. Furthermore, He is not hard of hearing.

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

**PRAYER AND THE EUCHARIST:**

"Teach us how to pray," the disciples asked Jesus [Luke 11:1-13]. This is the longing of our souls. We want to pray. We want to be with God. Prayer is what we are about, not just when we are in Church, but as people committed to Jesus Christ. We need to nurture our dialogue with him, our prayer Life. We come to Mass to pray the Lord's Supper as a community, and to reverence the Lord within us in communion. We call out to the Lord throughout our day, whether it is simply grace before meals, or speaking to the Lord the three meditations — God loves me unconditionally, God forgives me, and God is with me — or whether it is devotional prayers like the Rosary, or night prayer. Our days are meant to be united to God in prayer.

Prayer expresses who we are — the People of God. Recently, I came upon one of the invitations I sent out forty-eight years ago for my first Mass in my home parish. At the bottom of the invitation I wrote: "Come and pray with me." It seemed right at the time, but I look at that phrase now with a great deal of embarrassment. Now I would write: "Come and let us pray together." Your prayers strengthen me. The union of our prayers intensifies the presence of God in our community.

We need each other for our prayer life to grow. We need each other so we can really celebrate God's presence to such an extent that He becomes present on the altar through the gift of Holy Orders. Sometimes, I come upon people who say that they don't attend Church, but they pray on their own. I think it is great that they are praying, but I also know that they are depriving themselves of the greatest prayer — the prayer of Jesus Christ at the Last Supper, on the Cross and at Easter. It is great that they are praying alone, but by refusing to join the community they are depriving themselves of the Eucharist.

Maybe we all need to reflect a bit about the mystery of the Eucharist. We go to communion so often that it is easy for us to forget what we are doing, and whom we are receiving. When we receive communion, Jesus Christ becomes one with us. He is closer to us than our skin. When we receive communion, we worship Him within us with our whole being. All of us love Eucharistic Adoration. All of us love reverencing the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, when the Lord is exposed in the monstrance or processed around the congregation. Eucharistic adoration is wonderful. But there is something infinitely better than Eucharistic Adoration. That is receiving communion. No Eucharistic service is better than receiving communion. Every time we receive communion we take Jesus within ourselves. He is there at the Last Supper, looking at each person here and saying this is my body, this is my blood, take and eat, take and drink. When we receive communion, Jesus is present on the cross saying: "My body is given up for you. My blood is yours. Even if you were the only person to ever live, I would still accept the cross for you. I want to be inside you. I want you to have my body and blood." When we receive communion, Jesus is present within us at the Resurrection. This is the food of the new life of the Kingdom, the food of eternity, the bread of angels.

Jesus once told the story about a jewel merchant who came upon a valuable pearl. When he found it, he sold everything he had so he could possess it [see Matthew 13:44-47]. We have the Pearl of Great Price offered to us every day. The Eucharist, Holy Communion, the Presence of the Living Lord at the Last Supper, on the Cross and at the Resurrection is within us whenever we receive communion. "Teach us to pray, Lord," the apostles asked. He taught them the Lord's Prayer, and He gave us the Eucharist.

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



## HOW BIG OF A “NAG” CAN YOU BE?

A prayer-master advised his listeners to adopt the APU program when they pray. When predictably they asked what the acronym meant, he said with a smile: “Be aggressive. Be persistent. Be unreasonable.” The prayer-master’s disciples balked at such an approach to the Almighty. But the guru directed their attention to Genesis 18 — there Abraham is in conversation — or is it prayer? — with God. Abraham is aggressive, persistent, and unreasonable [Genesis 18:16, 20-32].

On the evidence, God should have destroyed the immoral and infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. They deserved whatever they got and then some. But Abraham proves to be an able negotiator. By clever maneuvering over some time, He causes God to back down on His original plan. Perhaps even at surprise to Himself, God allows Abraham to win the day. The cities are spared — at least for a while. Chalk a big victory up for Father Abraham. More importantly, do take a page out of his how-to-pray manual. If Abraham could get the gold ring in his prayer, why cannot you and I? Abraham has convincingly shown us that God is a soft touch. And His own Son happily confirms that point in Luke’s Gospel [11:1-13].

We have a big edge over Abraham. Jesus instructs us today to address God as “Father.” That translates as you know into “Daddy” or “Pa.” If we think the APU plan is off the wall, Abraham would think calling Jehovah “Daddy” — or, worse, “Pa” — completely ludicrous. As proof, note that in Genesis 18 Father Abraham addressed God most solemnly as “Lord” four times in the framework of a few seconds. Imagine what Abraham might have accomplished with his APU approach if he felt able to call his exalted Lord “Daddy!” Unfortunately for him — as he would be the first to tell us — he was born centuries too soon.

So, in our prayer, we must employ not merely a strong second effort, but rather Abraham’s third — and even fourth — effort. Abraham was a strong person, and obviously he was not designed to take “no” for an answer. Had God asked him what part of “no” he had difficulty in understanding, Abraham would answer immediately “the whole word, Lord.” If he could respond that way to God, then why not we? So, don’t be afraid to nag. After all, as someone has noted, God does have millions of people calling Him. There are times when God puts you on hold. But, when He does come back to you and says: “Thank you for holding,” you need to be ready to go. At that point, Father Abraham would quickly advise you to “go for the gold.”

When traveling through the majestic state of Arizona, I made a visit to an attractive chapel in a small town. I found the following in a pew — it ties in nicely with Luke’s Gospel: “I cannot say ‘our’ if I live only for myself. I cannot say ‘Father’ if I do not approach God like a child. I cannot say ‘who art in heaven’ if I am not laying up some treasure there right now. I cannot say ‘Hallowed be thy name’ if I am careless with that name. I cannot say ‘Thy kingdom come’ if I am not working to actualize it in the here and now. I cannot say ‘Thy will be done’ if I am resentful of that will for me at this moment. I cannot say ‘on earth as it is in heaven’ if I don’t look on heaven as my future home. I cannot say ‘Give us our daily bread’ if I am overanxious about tomorrow. I cannot say ‘Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us’ if I am waiting to settle a score with someone. I cannot say ‘Lead us not into temptation’ if I deliberately put myself in a place to be tempted — a sage teaches it is a smart person who flees temptation and does not leave a forwarding address. I cannot say ‘Deliver us from evil’ if I am not prepared to pray as though everything depends on God, and work as though as everything depends on me.”

It was Dag Hammarskjöld who wrote: “Hallowed be thy name, not mine. Thy Kingdom come, not mine. Thy will be done, not mine.”

One final word. From Luke’s Gospel, God does appear to enjoy brevity. The prayer He teaches his disciples — and us — has but 44 words. His Ten Commandments has a modest 297 words. The famous



thirty, then twenty, then ten. His boldness and his persistence are amazing. With each verse the tension rises. We think to ourselves: “Abraham, quit while you’re ahead!” We expect God at each request to say: “No! Enough! I’ve given too much already!” But none of that happens. Verse by verse, Abraham succeeds, so that God agrees that only a handful of just people are necessary to spare all of Sodom.

Now this passage points to the importance of prayer. Our whole prayer tradition is an inheritance from Judaism, and this passage is one of its most brilliant expressions. Abraham is not afraid to ask God for what he wants. He does not hold back or stand on ceremony. Far from being reserved or polite, he attacks the conversation with God with an aggressiveness that can only be compared to a customer bartering with a merchant in a Near-Eastern bazaar. His example shows us that we are not only called to pray, but called to pray with our whole heart and soul. We are called to pray as if our life and the life of others depended upon it. Therefore, the intensity and the self-interest with which Abraham prays poses to us a fundamental question.

To place that question most directly I would simply ask: “Do you pray?” I am not asking whether you say prayers — we all do that — but do you pray? Do you entrust to God some of the needs of your life with anything approaching the intensity and the sincerity of Abraham? I would be willing to bet that many of us very seldom pray in that way. I think most of us say: “I don’t want to bother God. Things are going along pretty well. I can handle things myself.” Even when there are needs in our life, serious needs, I think are inclined to trust that things will work out. But we do not turn to God and actually ask: “God, help me.”

Now both the Jewish and Christian traditions speak against such reluctance. What we are asked to do is to pray regularly and with all our soul. What we are asked to do is to entrust our deepest needs to God and believe that God will value the prayer that we offer. We are asked to believe that God is both Creator and Savior, and that our life is really in God’s hands. We believe all of those things in our head, but it is only in prayer that they move from theory to reality.

What would we pray for? We are able to choose. One of the great advantages of prayer is that it allows us to identify what is most important to us. We can pray for our children. We can pray that our cancer goes into remission. We can pray for a peaceful death. We can pray for world peace or that our marriage could heal. We can choose any need in our life. But it is not enough to identify such needs. We must actually ask God to help us. It is in vocalizing our needs and desires that they become prayer.

Now prayer of course is not magic. If we could pray today for a BMW and get one tomorrow, everyone would pray all the time. Prayer is an act of faith. It is entrusting our life, our deepest needs to God and believing that God will honor our request. Prayer is essential. Without prayer you cannot be a real Jew or a real Christian. Without prayer, all the things we believe are really just words. They are never entrusted to God in a real relationship. Jesus knows this. This is why as a good Jew he teaches us: “Ask and you will receive.” Notice he does not say you will receive what you ask for. But he does say you will receive. You will receive what God gives you, and what God gives you will be good.

Abraham, then, is our model. Identify some good thing, and trust God enough to ask for it. The outcome is in God’s hands, but the request and the way to offer it is in yours. So, ask with all your strength. You might receive peace for your family, restored health, or the hope to go on. Don’t hold back. You may save Sodom.

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

**YOU DO HAVE A PRAYER:**

Here are some questions for you: “How do you pray?” “Why pray at all?” “When do you pray?” “Is there a special formula or a sacred language that should be used when you pray?” One thing is clear. There are many questions, and there is much misunderstanding about how you pray and why. In a Peanuts cartoon, Charley Brown is kneeling beside his bed for prayer. Suddenly he stops and says to Lucy: “I think I’ve made a new theological discovery — a real breakthrough. If you hold your hands upside down, you get the opposite of what you pray for.”

Prayer must be more than an emergency magical lamp rubbed in a crisis. The truth is that many people give up on prayer because they never understand what prayer is. Much that passes for prayer is irrational, superstitious, and self-centered, and is therefore unworthy of the pattern of the prayer that Jesus offered to us as disciples.

How do you pray and why? We are not the first to ask this question. The disciples of Jesus came to Him one day and said: “Lord, teach us — teach us to pray!” [Luke 11:1-13]. Notice something here. When did the disciples ask for this? When did they make this request? Was it after Jesus gave a lecture on prayer? Was it after Jesus led a seminar on prayer? Was it after Jesus preached to the crowds on prayer? None of these. In Luke’s Gospel, we see that “Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, they said to him: ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’” They saw the power of prayer in Jesus. They saw how important prayer was to Him.

And that is the point — when the disciples saw Jesus praying, there awakened in them an interest in prayer, and a new exhibition of its power. Here, before their very eyes, they saw a personality in whom prayer was vital and influential. The more they lived with Jesus, the more they saw that they could never explain him or understand him unless they understood his praying. And it wasn’t because of new arguments, but because of amazing spiritual power released in him by prayer. They wanted him to tell them how to pray.”

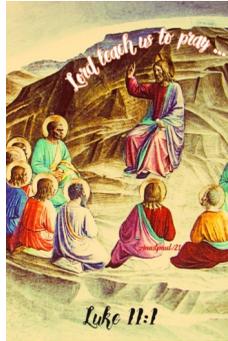
The disciples sometimes were slow on the uptake, but at this point they were quick and precisely on target. They saw in Jesus the answer to this question: how do we pray and why do we pray? And they learned from Him — as we can — what the elements are that lead to a meaningful prayer life.

First, we note that **Jesus prayed regularly — and so can we.** Jesus took the time to pray — He made it a vital part of His daily schedule. He disciplined himself to pray regularly. We all know about busy schedules; we have all experienced deadlines. We know about time pressures, stresses, and demands on our frantic lifestyle. We all live in that world. And we all have known the endless times we have been so hectic, or so filled with demands; we have all experienced the tough times. And isn’t it true that when we experience these, we just can’t afford to take the time to pray.

But that’s the moment when we need to pray most of all. That’s the moment when we can’t afford not to take the time to pray! But as a missionary priest once said: “There is really only one test of our prayer life. Do we want God? Do we want Him so much that we will go on if it takes 5, 6, 10 minutes or years to find Him? There is only one test really — do we want God?”

Everything worthwhile takes time — regular, disciplined time. Ask any artist. Ask any musician. Ask any athlete. Ask any doctor or lawyer or priest, minister, or engineer. It takes time, effort, and determination. You have to plug away at it. It doesn’t come over night, and it doesn’t stay with you unless you stay with it. And the same is true with prayer. It just takes a lot of practice — and the surprising thing is that it is worth it. If Jesus felt the need to pray regularly, how much more must we need to pray regularly?

Second, **Jesus prayed sensibly — and so can we.** Jesus prayed with intelligent common sense. He did not use prayer as some magical device to get some selfish wishes. All of us have to admit that it



is quite easy to blunt out a desperate prayer — “O Lord, make the brakes hold” — when we are going 80 miles an hour and suddenly face a need for a quick stop to avoid hitting another car. Not much intelligence in such a prayer — not much common sense. Think about this scenario for a moment: a major league baseball pitcher prays that God will help him “get ‘em out”, and a player on the opposing team prays that God will help him “get a hit”. Does God ever get confused when the batter and pitcher face each other?

How senseless to see God as nothing more than a pawn to be used for our own selfish desires. How senseless to picture God as some kind of divine waiter who at our slightest whim rushes off to a heavenly kitchen and then runs back with steaming portions of whatever we have asked for! How senseless to expect God to do for us what we can do for ourselves! If Jesus prayed regularly and He prayed sensibly, so can we.

Third, **Jesus prayed confidently** — and so can we. In the Lord’s prayer, we pray: “Thy will be done” — that was the prayer of Jesus — and it is a prayer we can pray with confidence because God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows what we need and what is good for us better than we know for ourselves.

God is a loving parent who knows what is best for His children. Our best prayer is a confident “Thy will be done!” One of the reasons Jesus prayed confidently was because He saw prayer as dialogue among friends. Someone once described prayer simply like that — as “friendship with God”. Prayer does not have to be formal and drawn out; prayer is a pleasant conversation between two friends. That’s what prayer is. It’s reaching out to God who is our best friend. And nothing is better than that.

—edited from the writings of James Moore which appear on the internet.

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK:**

**Monday:** Exodus 32:15-34, Matthew 13:31-35

**Tuesday:** Exodus 33:7-34:28, John 11:19-27

**Wednesday:** Exodus 34:29-35, Matthew 13:1-9

**Thursday:** Exodus 19:1-2, 9-11, 16-20b; Matthew 13:47-53

**Friday:** Leviticus 23:1-37, Matthew 13:54-58

**Saturday:** Leviticus 35:1-17, Matthew 14:1-12

**18<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time:** Ecclesiastes 1:2-23, Colossians 3:1-11, Luke 12:13-21

**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.

