Dear Friends,

The Lenten Season in the Church is a time of great reflection and self-renewal. This is a season of transformation and reconciliation.

As we move through this wonderful but deep Season of Lent, one is called to move inward, into the “Interior Castle,”which is our soul. The soul which is connected and hopefully sees the Holy Face of Jesus. The Season of Lent should transform our lives to be more like Christ. To tap into the most special place in our soul to encounter and engage our Lord and then to move us to live out the call of discipleship in our daily lives. He (Jesus) becomes our “top” priority and everything else is secondary.

Hard to do? Yes! But with the grace of God always around us, nothing is impossible. Christ never said that living out our Christian Faith would be easy, quite the opposite in fact. It is through the Cross that we are made whole. It is through our sufferings (cross) that we come to know, love, and serve the Lord. It is in the Cross that we have transformation. Transformation that moves us to LOVE God and neighbor - the two greatest commandments.

Our self-reflection and self-renewal moves us to contemplate on Sacred Scripture, and to help us realize God’s presence in the Sacraments He gives to us, so that we may be one with Christ in our call to be engaged in our Christian Discipleship. Our gifts of Time, Talents, and Treasure are given to us by God, not to be held selfishly, but to be used to live out our discipleship in the second greatest commandment of “Loving Neighbor.”

It is my hope that this Lenten booklet of reflections and stories may help us to deepen our relationship with God and neighbor. May it help us become the best Disciples we can be in a world that is in such need of God’s love. May it help us understand that we are the Body of Christ, and it is our duty, our obligation to truly connect with those around us and see we are responsible for each other. We are Christ’s hands, His feet, His eyes, His ears, His body to be shared with each other. On our journey, may we be transformed and renewed to be the person God made us to be. Love. Pray, hope, and don’t worry my friends, all things are possible with God.

Pax Christi,

Fr. Sean

**March 6, 2019 Ash Wednesday**

**Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18** *Jesus said to his disciples: “Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. “When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. “When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”*

**Reflection**: When I read the first line of Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18, *“Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them,”* I immediately thought of a scene in the 2000 movie *Return to Me.* There is a scene in that movie that takes place at a fund-raising party for a local zoo.  There is a wealthy philanthropist in that scene who makes his way around the room asking, *“Have you heard about my sizable anonymous donation?”* My wife and I have referenced that scene many times in the years that have followed.  Don’t we all know people who go out of their way to continuously tell us how humble they are?  Could there be a better example on how to live one’s life than this bible verse?  I don’t think so.  Do good, for goodness’ sake.  Do the right thing, when no one is watching.  When you buy coffee for the car behind you at Tim Hortons, you don’t need to post it on Facebook or Instagram.

*“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them.”*  This makes me think about where *I* feel closest to God.  You might not expect the Chair of the Pastoral Council to say this, but it is not necessarily in a church, built by people.  I often feel the closest to God, when I am all alone in nature.  When it is so quiet you can hear the sound of the gravel beneath your feet, the cool breeze over your face, the smell of the dying leaves, or growing plants and trees…  I can easily see why Native Americans believe the spirits of our ancestors are carried by the wind.  The bible may say that where two or more are gathered in my name, I am there – but I would argue you can be very close to God in total solitude.

**Raymond Stoklosa**, son, father of two teenagers, and a husband.  Parishioner and Chair of the St. John Paul II Parish Pastoral Council.

March 7, 2019 Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Luke 9:22–25

*Jesus said to his disciples: “The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised.”*

*Then he said to all, “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?”*

**Reflection**: Jesus, on the way to the cross, was rejected by many. Sneered at, spit upon, mocked, and brutally beaten proves the old adage that no good deed goes unpunished. Jesus suffered so we would have the opportunity to enter into eternity with the Father. Our sin nature causes us to want to reject this truth. When we chose to follow Jesus, we too must suffer some of the slings and arrows thrown at us by others who would reject him. It is so very important for us to convey to others through witnessing this truth given to us by Jesus. Jesus declared that He was the Way, The Truth, and The Life and no man cometh unto the Father except through Him.

I understand that this world is temporary and our existence in it is very brief. I feel that if we embrace the Truth of Jesus and we do as much as we are able to convey that truth to others, we may all have that opportunity for eternal life. This opportunity we have is a gift from our Father in Heaven, so while we are here on earth, we should make the best of it. Our efforts will no doubt bring controversy and division with those we know and love but that is the casualty of war. People who are busy enriching themselves in this world are often too distracted by that pursuit to embrace the Kingdom of Heaven. They will lose their eternal life if they fail to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior while they are still alive in this world. It is up to us who have been gifted with the Truth, to covey it to others who do not have it and suffer the consequences that result in conveying that truth.

**Paul Baker**- Age 65- Married- Antiques Dealer/Restorer-Parishioner St. John Paul II Church

**March 8, 2019 Friday after Ash Wednesday**

**Matthew 9:14–15**

*The disciples of John approached Jesus and said, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but your disciples do not fast?” Jesus answered them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.”*

**Reflection**: The disciples of John, approached Jesus and said, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but your disciples do not fast?” Jesus answered them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.” Jesus allowed the disciples to rejoice in His presence, as He knew of his soon to be destiny- His Passion and death. He knew that there would be a time very soon when He would have to leave them, and their world would end as they knew it. He knew that their hearts would ache and long for Him; much like when we lose someone we love very much; we mourn and grieve and feel like our life as we know it is ending. Their “fast” would be because Jesus was no longer with them. But, because of His great love for us, He gives us *THE GREATEST GIFT* the world has ever, or will ever, know; the gift of Him Truly Present in the Most Holy Eucharist. *We* fast during lent to reflect the forty days Jesus spent in the desert in prayer and fasting. We also fast an hour before receiving the Most Holy Eucharist out of reverence for *who* we are receiving. When we enter the Mass, we enter the wedding feast. As Catholics we are so privileged to be able to receive Jesus at the wedding feast, where *Jesus is* *the bridegroom*. We are not merely guests, *but the bride*! We consummate the marriage when we receive Jesus, Truly Present in the Most Holy Eucharist. So, as we approach the altar of Holy Communion, we should do so with the wonder and awe that He deserves. Our hearts should be filled with love and longing, as it rejoices in the majesty and mystery of His True Presence as we receive Him.

**Dina Pacillo** St. John Paul II - Parishioner

**March 9, 2019 First Saturday after Ash Wednesday**

**Luke 5:27–32** *Jesus saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, “Follow me.” And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him. Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.”*

**Reflection**: Next Sunday, there will be an IRS agent stationed at the front door of the church. He will be collecting names and making sure you paid your taxes. Jesus drew great crowds at His early Church. Levi used this opportunity to tax His followers. Levi was able to hear truths from Jesus that he had never been told before. Levi was despised and hated by all but his follow tax collectors. It was not uncommon to collect far more in tax than was due. Jesus saw Levi sitting at the customs post and said to him, “Follow me”. Levi got up, left his former life and followed Jesus. Next Sunday, when you come to church and see the IRS agent at the door, you may be inclined to park in the back and use that door. Imagine the complaining and drama that would unfold in the gathering space. Most of us would want him to leave. What if a fellow parishioner or the parish priest invited him in for Mass. There are great opportunities in this life to welcome in those that feel as outcasts and looked down upon by society. Joining the St. Vincent DePaul society at our parish or Little Portion Friary are just two examples. Secondly, are there are things in life that you have been searching for which you thought would give you fulfillment and satisfaction. Maybe, you have made a lot of mistakes in life. Things that you are not proud of. To Jesus, it doesn’t matter; He is calling you. It doesn’t matter what is in your past. He wants you right now just as you are. Lent is a prime time to go to confession and wipe away the slate for a fresh start. It’s also an opportunity to join the parish community for this upcoming Mission Week. At Mission, you will learn more about yourself and your faith. Don’t be afraid to ask others to come to Mission with you. After all, Jesus said, “Follow me”.

**Bob Cook**, Husband, father, Catechist, Parishioner

**March 10, 2019 First Sunday of Lent**

**Luke 4:1–13** *Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, One does not live on bread alone.” Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, “I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me.” Jesus said to him in reply, “It is written: You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.” Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you, and: With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” Jesus said to him in reply, “It also says, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.” When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.*

**Reflection**: During the season of Lent, we focus on repentance, sacrifice and the suffering and passion of Jesus. Our ability to repent, sacrifice and focus only comes by the grace of God and today’s readings remind us of that. Although many of us won’t face the temptations Jesus did, we all face temptations in our day to day lives, big and small. A lot in life forces us to make rash and unthoughtful decisions in critical and vital moments. Then we are forced to live with those decisions. There’s nothing wrong with making mistakes and Jesus gives us the power of reconciliation to correct those mistakes. Jesus demonstrates this ability and thus our ability to put temptations into contexts against God’s vocation for us. Sometimes, I struggle to make the right decisions and see past the moment I’m living in and after, realize how it’ll affect my future vocation and relationship with God. Jesus knew giving into the temptations and breaking the identity He’s created for himself, would be detrimental to his Fathers plans for Him. This Lenten season, we must strive to reflect on our ability, to focus and sacrifice, make decisions and opportunities that we may really want in order to stay on the path God carved for us. Jesus laid the ultimate foundation for denying the devil by simply using the word of God and showing His true power. Jesus spoke the truth and that was more powerful than the lies of the devil.

**Jonathan Molik**: Media Coordinator and catechist at St. John Paul II Parish

**March 11, 2019 Monday of the first Week of Lent**

**Matthew 25:31–46**

*Jesus said to his disciples: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’ Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’ Then they will answer and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?’ He will answer them, ‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’ And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

**Reflection**: Being a parent of little ones, there are many teachable moments, but I don’t always take advantage of them. I read this passage in the morning and then went about my day. One of my boys started fighting with another (unfortunately a frequent occurrence some days) and said some things that he maybe should not have said to him. We were trying to get in the car to go somewhere so that (kind of) ended the fight. As I was driving and trying to find a few moments of quiet, the fight continued. This verse came back to me. “What you did to the least of my brothers, you did to me.” I turned off the radio and asked them if they remember hearing this reading at mass…they had a vague recollection of it. I said, “Do you see Jesus in your brothers? Do you see Jesus in other people? Jesus is in all of us and therefore, what we do and say to our brothers, what we do and say to other people, we are really doing and saying to Jesus.” The Holy Spirit worked through me on that one! The car was quiet for a minute as we all thought about that.

How can you serve Jesus today as you serve your brothers and sisters in Christ? Who in your life needs to hear Jesus speaking through you? Allow the Jesus in you to love the Jesus in someone else today.

**Sarah Dolph,** Wife to Eric, mom to Jacob, Nicholas, Sean and Gabriella, often seen in the first pew at 9:30 mass trying to focus her “cherubs”.

**March 12,2019 Tuesday of the First Week of Lent**

**Matthew 6:7–15**

*Jesus said to his disciples: “In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

*“This is how you are to pray:*

*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. “If you forgive men their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions*.”

**Reflection**: In teaching us to pray, Christ specifically instructs us to ask our Heavenly Father to "give us this day our daily bread."  I have always found this a difficult part of the prayer.  When we have a Father who has blessed us so abundantly, why would we ask for only today's portion of His blessing?  I've come to realize that it's another expression of our own faith.  We not only have faith that God will provide what we need, but we have faith enough not to worry about what the future holds.  Indeed, at the end of this same chapter, Christ instructs "Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself." (Mt 6:34)

As a parent, I find that I'm constantly curating my description of the way the world works when explaining things to my children.  Many headlines and current events raise questions from my inquisitive kids, which forces me to balance the desire to be open and honest with them against the desire to protect them from some of the more difficult aspects of our world.  So, I usually choose to share as much information as possible while deflecting from some of the more troubling parts of the story.  Does this struggle of mine mean that I love my kids any less than if I just laid out all the bare facts?  I don't think so, because I don't think this is how our Heavenly Father shows His love to us.  He knows us perfectly.  He knows what we're capable of hearing and what we may not yet be ready for.  And He also knows that we’re growing in our knowledge and desire to serve Him and that the time will come when we can know fully all that He desires for us.  So just like I withhold some challenging facts from my kids to protect their innocence, so Our Father protects us, meets us where we are, and thereby shows His love for us.  Our right response is to trust in His wisdom to "give us this day our daily bread."

**Eric Dolph**, husband of Sarah and father of 3 boys and 1 girl.

**March 13, 2019 Wednesday of the First Week of Lent**

**Luke 11:29–32** *While still more people gathered in the crowd, Jesus said to them, “This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah. Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. At the judgment the queen of the south will rise with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something greater than Solomon here. At the judgment the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because at the preaching of Jonah they repented, and there is something greater than Jonah here.”*

**Reflection**: When I look at the world around me and I hear of the indescribable events occurring in countries all over and in my own, I think “Someone has to do something for these people; where are the people willing to change this in our world”. In the Gospel, Jesus talks about the Ninevites and the story of Jonah. In Jonah’s time, Nineveh was a city ﬁlled with such evils. God sent Jonah so they would change their ways. In the case of the Ninevites, Jonah agrees with God to go to them and they repent their sins. In the Gospel, Jesus is speaking to the audience that, just like how Jonah went to the Ninevites, the Son of Man will come for their generation. The Gospel tells us to be like Jonah and to go out and help our communities change, by doing something positive to cover up all the bad and give others something to think about.

**Max & Zack Barney**

Zachary Barney, a sophomore at Canisius High School, attended Southtowns Catholic from preschool to Grade 8 & lives with his Mom, Dad, brothers Max & Jake in the town of Evans.

Max Barney, Grade 8 at Southtowns Catholic School, lives with his

Mom, Dad, brothers Zack & Jake in the town of Evans.

**March 14, 2019 Thursday of the first week of Lent**

**Matthew 7:7–12** *Jesus said to his disciples: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asked for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asked for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.”*

**Reflection**: As I read this passage today, it speaks to me of the prayer relationship I should have going on with God. I am not good with long meditation or long prayers. What I try to do is to have Jesus in my head for the day and He makes His way to my heart from there. As I wake up, while getting dressed, I make up a morning offering. Whenever I eat, I thank God for the people, plants and animals responsible for me having food. Getting in the car I pray to God and my guardian angel to keep me safe and all those in my path. If someone cuts me off in traffic or throws me the finger, I pray to God for me and to calm them. At the end of the day, while laying in bed, I examine my conscience for the day, say the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father and the Guardian Angel Prayer. Usually, I feel so peaceful, I fall asleep before finishing . . .. And that’s not bad for a high-strung person with a sleep disorder.

**Joanne Meyer**, Married to Bob for 51 years, 5 children, 17 grandchildren, parishioner 43 years, retired teacher.

**March 15, 2019 Friday of the First Week of Lent**

**Matthew 5:20-26** *Jesus said to his disciples: “I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. “You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, you shall not kill: and whoever kills will be liable to judgement. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgement and whoever says to his brother, Raga, will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, “You fool, will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brothers has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.*

**Reflection**: This reading is very appropriate for me, as a family member has not spoken to me since that person did something that I disapproved of and disagreed with 10+ years ago. This person felt that we did not support the decisions they made. We have remained in contact with, and supportive of other family members who were affected by those decisions. I have attempted many times to speak with this person, sending several cards – etc., but no response. I don’t put a return address since my cards are returned. I would like to re-connect, but don’t know how. I pray for this family member often! I used to feel guilty, but feel prayers are my only answer. This person lives out of town so “stopping by” is not a solution or option. I pray things will change as we are both getting older. I put my family member in God’s hands.

**Nancy Piwko**, Wife, mother, grandmother, parishioner

**BONUS REFLECTION**

This passage always makes me sit up straighter when I read it and makes me take stock of my own relationship. I think Jesus is warning us here about being judgmental towards family and friends and is asking us to look at ourselves before passing judgement or making accusations. I think when He talks about surpassing the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, He means we have to see the error in others and forgive it. Long ago, a close family member did something to hurt me. I was very angry for quite some time, but realized it was crippling me, so I prayed that I would be given the grace to forgive. Today, I feel no anger and cannot even remember the offense. God helped to turn righteousness into compassion and forgiveness because I asked Him.

**Mary Szeglowski**, parishioner for 40 years before our move to Eden last year. We miss you all. We have found a wonderful spirit filled parish at Epiphany in Langford but still come back to JPII every once in a while.

**March 16, 2019 Saturday of the First Week of Lent**

**Matthew 5:43–48**

*Jesus said to his disciples: “You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers and sisters only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

**Reflection**: How do you love people who hate you and want to kill you? These are people we do not know or even know about. They live a different lifestyle than we do and have been taught to hate us and our way of life since they were children. They want to destroy everything we love and cherish, Our God, our family and friends.

Jesus tells us we should love our enemies and to pray for them. We have to overcome our fear and put our trust in the Lord, our God. By our prayers and by His grace, we need to reach them just as Jesus did from the Cross. They still are His children and He loves all of us.

It is hard to understand God’s love because His love is unconditional. We always have conditions for our love. “I will love you because you are good to me or because you have done something wonderful for me, etc.”

Jesus does not see in human terms like us but sees the heart of each person. We cannot read the hearts because our hearts are so stubborn. The only way we can love and forgive is to forgive like Jesus and say, “Father forgive them, they know not what they do.” In order to do this, we have to ask for His grace to be strong, to persevere and continually pray.

**Marie Baldelli**, married to Jerry Baldelli for 54 years. They have four adult children and three grandchildren, have been a parishioner since marriage, have been a Eucharistic minister since 1979. Introduce Eucharistic Adoration, with another parishioner, in the 1990’s. Love our parish.

**March 17, 2019 Second Sunday of Lent**

**Luke 9:28b–36** *Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying, his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” But he did not know what he was saying. While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my chosen Son; listen to him.” After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.*

**Reflection**: Growing up, I remember my grandmother reminding me and my siblings to “listen to our parents." Like a mantra, those same words were repeated over and over to us by aunts and uncles and most other adults we met growing up. Not really giving that advice much credence or thought, we usually allowed it to go in one ear and out the other; always believing we knew better! As luck would have it, we persistently found ourselves unsuccessful in our endeavors, quite discouraged, and sometimes in a heap of trouble. Situations all completely unnecessary if we had just listened! As we matured, we realized that our parent’s advice stemmed from their great love and a wisdom composed over time.

This same love and wisdom hold true of Christ. In this passage, God the Father is encouraging all of us to "listen to him" (Jesus). Yet, in the verse which follows, Jesus doesn't speak. So, what exactly are we supposed to listen to? I confess, I found myself wondering, too. It is only when I looked at the prior passages (Luke:22-27) that I found what Jesus said. After telling the apostles he would be rejected, suffer, die, and rise again, he continues: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me." How, then, can we actually do that in our present day?

It goes without saying that we live during a time period when success is measured by obtaining "bigger, better, newer, or faster!" A time where "selfies" are encouraged more often than "selflessness." A general belief that "what makes you happy" is all that really matters! Idea's and attitudes having nothing to do with "renouncing!" Additionally, we're asked to "take up our crosses," whatever they might be: losing a loved one; fighting an addiction; suffering health issues; unemployment; or even a broken heart! Just like a loving parent, God asks that we trust in his wisdom, because we, his children, rebel and don't always understand. It just takes faith and a willingness to "listen."

**Liz Marszalkowski**, who has been married to Denis for 33 years, has two daughters (Ali & Ellen) and has been a parishioner for 15 years.

**March 18, 2019 Monday of the Second week ofLent**

**Luke 6:36–38** *Jesus said to his disciples: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. “Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”*

**Reflection**: The more we love like Jesus loves us, the more fulfilled we become. Acts of mercy, such as forgiveness, will bring us closer to our Lord and peace within our hearts. Our time here on earth is temporary but the gifts from God are eternal. God is love and by showing love to others we can grow our relationship with God as we bring others to Him. It is not our duty to judge but to be a reflection of God's love and His endless mercy.

**Amanda Dubreville** - Age 23, parishioner

**March 19, 2019 Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent**

**Matthew 1:16, 18–21, 24a** *Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ. Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.*

**Reflection**: I was quite excited to receive this passage for my reflection because I am always in awe of St. Joseph’s faith and obedience. We don’t know or hear very much about St. Joseph in the gospels, but when I do, what always strikes me, is that he must have been a man with great faith. I often ask myself, is my faith that strong? Can I be strong like St. Joseph?

In this scripture passage, he was ready to do one thing ... quietly divorce Mary, ... but he was open to the Spirit when he had the dream to take her into his home. It was similar in the next chapter of Matthew (2: 12-14).

*And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way. When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.”*

It was in a dream that he was moved to follow out God’s will. He took Mary into his home and devoted himself to care for the Child Jesus and Mary, guiding the family through difficult times, providing for his family and protecting them. In Joseph's fatherly role, he sacrificed much. If he had not been accustomed to relying on God's grace, he could not have withstood the pressure. In the little written about him in the gospels, we can learn a great deal of what it means to be attentive in faith to God's word, to respond to God's grace, and to trust in hope that God will fulfill completely His plan.

On this Solemnity of St. Joseph, let us remember, as we struggle with the ability to overcome doubts or get through our struggles, let us look to the virtues we find in St. Joseph. Being rooted in scripture and prayer, we are one with God and are more in tune with “hearing” His voice when he is speaking to us. During this Lenten journey, may we be attentive to God’s voice and where he is calling us.

*St. Joseph ~ Pray for Us.*

**Linda Hooper**, wife of Deacon Mark Hooper and mother of three children. She was the parish secretary at Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St. John Paul II for 22 years before retiring in April 2018. She now enjoys traveling with Mark, volunteering and using her technology know-how and enjoying time with their family.

**March 20, 2019 Wednesday of the Second week of Lent**

**Matthew 20:17–28** *As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the Twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day. Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached Jesus with her sons and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something. He said to her, “What do you wish?” She answered him, “Command that these two sons of mine sit, one at your right and the other at your left, in your kingdom.” Jesus said in reply, “You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?” They said to him, “We can.” He replied, “My chalice you will indeed drink, but to sit at my right and at my left, this is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.” When the ten heard this, they became indignant at the two brothers. But Jesus summoned them and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

**Reflection**: I think this reading can help us contemplate motive.  What is my motive for the things I say and do?  Are my motives pure or do I have a hidden purpose (sometimes the hidden purpose may not be as obvious to us unless we reflect)?  A pure motive would be doing or saying something that is for the Glory of God and not for our own selfish gain.  What are the attachments I may have that may affect my motive?  Do I have an attachment to resentment?  Do I always look out for the best interest of those I may not really get along with or do I gossip and try to make myself look better?  Do I have an attachment towards worry?  Do I pray for trust or do I complain to everyone for attention?  Do I do or say things to have people think I am holy or am I doing it for the Glory of God?  Taking a deeper look at our motivation is humbling.  God works best through a humble soul.  Humility helps us to grow in holiness.  It helps us to be more conscious of what we say and do and why.  What motivates us should be our purpose on this earth...to know, love and serve God.  If our main motive does not achieve this then we need to take a step back and evaluate.  We need to serve others with a pure motive and not just for recognition.  In this way, people see we live and love differently and are attracted to that quality and therefore, bring them closer to God. This Lent let us take the time to evaluate what motivates us.  You will be surprised to see the areas that need improvement when you humble yourself before God.  What motivates you? Are you here to serve or to be served?

**Mary Dubreville**, wife of Jim Dubreville, mother of seven children, grandmother of one (so far) and a religious education teacher.

**BONUS REFLECTION:** : When reflecting on this passage, the first thing that comes to mind is “Be careful what you ask for!” Even though James and John were part of Jesus’ inner circle, they did not fully understand what was being asked of our Lord. Even when he tried to explain it to them, they did not understand. How many times in our own life do we ask for God’s help without understanding the whole picture or the outcome of our request? As I’m sure God will always answer our prayers, just not always in the way we expect them. The outcome, however, is the best possible outcome whether we understand it or not. As humans, we allow our pride to get in the way. Jesus is very clear when he tells the Apostles, “Whoever wishes to be great among you, shall be your servant. Whoever wishes to be first among you, shall be your slave.” The statement is telling us we are creatures that were created to serve one another to help those less fortunate. To be great is not in a title or financial status but it is in the way we treat and act toward our fellow man.

**Brian Pacillo** St. John Paul II – Parishioner

**March 21, 2019 Thursday of the Second Week of Lent**

Luke 16: 19-31

*Jesus said to the Pharisees: "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.' He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'"*

**Reflection**: The story of Lazarus is one that I feel we all have been able to relate to at one time or another in our lives.  We have all been blessed with so much & have many opportunities to share our gifts. Do we give to others as much as we are capable of or do we thoughtlessly ignore those in need?

This reading also gives us insight as to life after death & provides us with a vision of what we may encounter if we do not come to the aid of others along the way.

The conclusion of this reading should be a wakeup call to all of us - to heed the warning as suggested by Lazarus - as Jesus did rise from the dead - for each of us!

**Nancy McIntyre**: Growing up as part of a Catholic family, I was given the opportunity to attend Catholic school through High School.  Larry & I have been blessed to have raised our three children & been a part of this parish community for the last 27 years.  In addition to the many activities we have participated in, I especially have enjoyed being part of the Mission team for many years.

**March 22, 2019 Friday of the Second Week of Lent**

Matthew 21:33–43, 45–46 *Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: “Hear another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a hedge around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went on a journey. When vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to obtain his produce. But the tenants seized the servants and one they beat, another they killed, and a third they stoned. Again he sent other servants, more numerous than the first ones, but they treated them in the same way. Finally, he sent his son to them, thinking, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance.’ They seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What will the owner of the vineyard do to those tenants when he comes?” They answered him, He will put those wretched men to a wretched death and lease his vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the proper times.” Jesus said to them, Did you never read in the Scriptures: The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes? Therefore, I say to you, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit.” When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that he was speaking about them. And although they were attempting to arrest him, they feared the crowds, for they regarded him as a prophet.*

**Reflection**: I can’t help but think that we are all just tenants in this world. Just as in this parable, God as the land owner, has created a beautiful planet for us. He has supplied us with everything we need to prosper. He only asks that when the time comes, we give to him what is right and just. We can do this when we feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, or aid the sick. There are many ways to show love for others. God has sent us prophets and His only son to inform us of what He is expecting from us. If we are selfish, cruel and show no love for others, we will share in the same fate as the tenants in the parable. Jesus said that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to people that will produce its fruit. It has been said that Jesus is the cornerstone rejected by man but chosen by God to be our foundation. I believe that if we want to share in the glory of Heaven, we must embrace Jesus as our foundation and follow the commandments given by God to become the tenants of this land that he expects us to be.

Kevin Tomasik. Married to Joelle Tomasik, three children. Tyler, Dylan and Emily.  Facilities manager at Cantalician Center for learning, involved in Pre-Cana, Mission, Lawn Fete and divine mercy Canticle

**March 23, 2019 Saturday of the Second week of Lent**

Luke 15:1–3, 11–32 *“A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.’ So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.”’ So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ But his father ordered his servants, ‘Quickly, bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ Then the celebration began. . . . . . .*

**Reflection**: I have listened to several talks and homilies on the Prodigal son, a parable Jesus told in Mathews’ gospel. When I first heard about the Prodigal son, I did not understand the far-reaching implications of the parable but was happy that the son recognized his mistake (sin) and decided to seek forgiveness from his father. I was also happy that the father was as gracious as he was, and instead of concentrating on the mistakes of his son, he celebrated his son’s return. While not speaking the words “I forgive you,” he welcomed the son back into his life with compassion, and with actions that demonstrated forgiveness. I pray that I can be as gracious with anyone who offends me. The parable gives me insight about what action is necessary if I sin or misuse my relationships with my friends or family in any way. Instead of a quick “sorry about that” when I hurt someone, the Parable of the Prodigal motivates me to consider that actions speak louder than words. A sincere note of apology, or some other more deliberate way of expressing sorrow might be part of my Lenten action this season.

**Bob Mullins** Married to Carol and an active member of the parish for several years. They have 4 children and 11 grandchildren. He is a Eucharistic Minister and Lector and serves on the St. Vincent DePaul committee. RCIA team and volunteers at parish activities as needed.

**March 24, 2019 Third Sunday of Lent**

Luke 13:1–9 *Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. Jesus said to them in reply, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them— do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!” And he told them this parable: “There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, ‘For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?’ He said to him in reply, ‘Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.’”*

**Reflection**: Over the years in my experiences I have learned that no one is immune from suffering. I have seen a good deal and carried my own from time to time. You need not go far to see suffering, our churches, schools, workplaces, and our own homes. It seems everywhere we look, there are people hurting in some way. Suffering is part of this life and we never can understand why. Any visit or stay to an ER or hospital and you will see many people who are suffering in many ways and they come from all walks of life rich; poor, different ethnic backgrounds, religions, friendly, polite, some rude and unkind and the list goes on. None of that really matters though. What matters is the world is full of people who are hurting, physically, emotionally and spiritually. While some may seem “different”, some innocent and undeserving of such suffering others; not so innocent. This scripture reminds me we are not to judge and none of us is better than the other in God’s eyes. We are all in need of love. We are all sinners in need of repentance. As a mother, I do not love or want better for one of my children more than the other. None of the differences between them, nothing they can do, can change that. I want the best for each of them, as God does for all His children.

Like the story of the fig tree the best thing I have found to do to ease the suffering of those around me is to cultivate those people by love, by touch, by listening, by giving them a chance. There will always be suffering, and I realize I am not called to understand why. I believe we are all called to reach out to one another with the love of Christ to bring healing to those God has placed in our lives and with trust in God. we will be blessed with our own healing in return.

**Joelle Tomasik**.  Married to Kevin Tomasik. Three children Tyler, Dylan and Emily. Classroom Aide at Buffalo hearing and Speech in Angola. Involved in Pre-Cana, Mission, Lawn Fete, Faith Formation, Lector, Eucharistic Minister, and Divine Mercy Canticle.

**March 25, 2019 Monday of the Third week of Lent**

 Luke 1:26–38

*The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, “Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.” But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end.” But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” And the angel said to her in reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.” Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.*

**Reflection**: When reading this passage from the Bible, what came to mind was preparing for Christmas, setting up the manger; animals, Mary and Joseph, then putting baby Jesus in the manger Christmas morning. The joy of songs, gifts, dressy clothes and family. This was tradition for many years. As I grew older and married and had 3 children, I thought of Mary finding out she was pregnant at an early age, being told it was the Son of God. Traveling while pregnant to a strange city, having to deliver in a stable. Mary had to be very trusting, also strong. As a mother, she was to care for Jesus and follow all religious laws.

Our children are gifts from God, and we have the same duty as Mary in raising our children. We, as Gods children find ourselves sinning or straying from Gods words, forgetting we are the examples for our children. But God is love and He forgives so we can trust again and grow in Christ.

**Carol Peschio** married with 3 children, 7 grandchildren and a dog. Has lived in Hamburg for 47 years. Parish organizations: Eucharistic Minister, Home Visits, Little Flock Prayer Group.

**March 26, 2019 Tuesday of the Third week of Lent**

Matthew 18:21–35 *Peter approached Jesus and asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy–seven times. That is why the Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’ Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. . .* . . . .

**Reflection**: This passage reminds me of my own humanness and how far from perfect I am. It is useless to give offerings to God while you are at odds with your brother. Most days it is easy to forgive, but this passage speaks of the forgiveness required to those who have “no way of ever paying back the debt” they’ve created. It speaks of a very big hurt; a major, and enormous offense. When I think of such an event I can understand the struggle. Forgiveness does NOT mean you’re giving permission for the offender to “do that again”. Wikipedia says ***Forgiveness is intentional. It is a voluntary process where the offended undergoes a change in feelings and attitude regarding an offense, then chooses to let go of negative emotions, and wishes the offender well.”*** But when people do such harm, how can we be expected to forgive and wish them well? Yet, Jesus requires us to. Most times I say that I choose to forgive, so every month I make a payment in order to repay what has been done. But once in a while; when the burden of the payment is heavy, I get bitter. The bitterness can allow my thoughts to drift towards hatred. What brings me out of despair is the words of Jesus himself. Jesus did not include an exception clause for reconciliation. Jesus said: “if he is an enemy, love him” (Matthew 5:44), “if he persecutes you, pray for him” (v44), “if he humiliates you, do not retaliate” (v39), “if he takes advantage of you, give him more than he asks” (v41). Unconditional love is what Jesus showed us in Luke 23:34. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” I have to fall on my knees and beg for forgiveness because this burden doesn’t belong to me. This was not intended for me to keep. It was intended to give it up to the Lord so that I could be free to love the offender just as Jesus loves. So as a Christian I do forgive. I pray: Jesus I trust in you. Is there someone you need to make peace with?

**Dawn Baker** I am happily married to my husband Paul. I have two grown boys whom I am extremely proud of, and a grandparent to a beautiful baby girl! I've been teaching high school faith formation for 26 years, I'm a member of the Little Flock Prayer Group and the Altar & Rosary Society.

**March 27 Wednesday of the Third week of Lent**

Matthew 5:17–19 *Jesus said to his disciples: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the Kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

**Reflection**: The law that God gave to his chosen people was meant to give them everything they needed to live a just life and to care for one another. The commandments that Jesus talks about today were ways that God commanded His people to love each other. Jesus plainly stated that he came to fulfill the law. And how did he do that? By loving us to his death! He stepped beyond his rights…. in love. And he challenges us to do the same. We must treat others with the love and mercy that God commands of us. We must always keep in mind the forgiveness, mercy and love God has given us for our sins, and, in turn, extend that forgiveness, mercy and love to others.

**Joe Franz** is a third-year seminarian at Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora.

**March 28, 2019 Thursday of the Third week of Lent**

Luke 11:14–23 *Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute, and when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke and the crowds were amazed. Some of them said, “By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons.” Others, to test him, asked him for a sign from heaven. But he knew their thoughts and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house. And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that it is by Beelzebul that I drive out demons. If I, then, drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man fully armed guards his palace, his possessions are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him, he takes away the armor on which he relied and distributes the spoils. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.”*

**Reflection**: Jesus was constantly under attack by the religious leaders of His time. They all wanted one thing and that was to trick Him into proving He was not the Son of God. Don’t we do the same thing today? How many times has our Savior had to drive the demon out of me? Many but, unlike the man in Luke, I have remained mute. I have failed to speak after being cleansed of my sins through the Sacrament of Penance. I have “done my penance” and returned to the worldly me and not the spiritual me. No more. We all know the power of Beelzebub. We have seen the evil that can overtake each one of us. We are all members of the fallen race of man who has natural, human weakness. How often have we sided with the devil against our God? In Luke the unbelievers asked Christ for a sign from Heaven. Yet, here was the ultimate sign of God’s love for His people standing in front of them. Were they blinded by the evil that kept them from seeing the one who is, “the way, the truth and the life”? How many times have I been blinded to the signs Christ has placed before me? When I give in to the evil side, what do I have? Only shame, pain, anguish and a feeling of filthiness. And that just begins the ball rolling. But being separated from the One who offers unending love, forgiveness, grace and everlasting life is my crown of thorns. As I see it, each one of us has the choice. Our God is the only one who has the power to overcome and drive out the demon from us. Our choice is to accept Jesus as our Savior. Our choice is to be the strong man, the strong woman, the strong child who protects themselves from the wiles and snares of the evil in our world. Christ has given us all we need to defend ourselves and be those who are with Him and not against Him. Lord, I need your love, your forgiveness and grace. Help me to be worthy of the gifts you offer. Help me to be your sign among us. Help me to be a gatherer for you as you have taught us, for you are the Word.

**Bill Hornbuckle**  Lived in 12 states and two foreign countries, moved from California 4 years ago.  Married to Marie for 3 years. Involved in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, lector and an adult altar server, member of Pastoral Council, and the Men's Group.  He has four children and six grandchildren.

**March 29, 2019 Friday of the Third Week of Lent**

Mark 12:28-34

*One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, He is One and there is no other than he. And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions*.

**Reflection:** Jesus clearly states that loving God is the most important thing that we should do in our lives. In fact, he says, we should not just **love** God, but love God with ‘all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength’. Wow! There are people here on earth that I know well and I love the most. Jesus is challenging me to love God even more than I love them. And why not? God is the one who created them and gave them to me! Then Jesus gives me the next, and even more challenging commandment; to ‘love my neighbor as myself’ . That’s easy when my neighbor agrees with me and does what I think they should do. But what about when we have differences? Jesus didn’t address that! Or maybe he did. Maybe what Jesus is saying is that, just like God loves me unconditionally when I don’t do what **He** desires of me, that’s how I should continue to love my neighbor even when they don’t do what I desire of them. Whether that ‘neighbor’ is a family member, a friend, or an acquaintance, Jesus is challenging me to love them like He loves me. He was willing to sacrifice in a big way for me. How is he asking me to give back through sacrifice for my neighbor? Something to think about!

Carol Mullins, Pastoral Associate, Parishioner

**March 30, 2019 Saturday of the Third Week of Lent**

Luke 18:9–14

*Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. “Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity – greedy, dishonest, adulterous – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.’ But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’ I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

**Reflection**: What stands out most as I ponder this reading is the fact that I can look back in my life and recognize the times I have acted and still act the same way as the Pharisee. Whether it was in a position of authority, or a place at a table, or how I was as a teenager with my parents, certain that I knew everything and was above their advice, I am guilty of it all. I am grateful that as I have gotten older, I have been blessed with God’s grace to find Him in my midst and realize that it is only through Him and the gift of the Holy Spirit that I have been able to recognize my many shortcomings. I think arrogance and ego go hand in hand in our teenage years. In a family of eight children it seemed as if it was every man for himself, survival of the fittest and all that. There was no backing down on anything and we certainly felt justified in whatever it took to establish first position in the house. There are definitely rites of passage growing up that tone down our insolence as we hopefully evolve into worthy human beings. I am a constant work in progress and can be cut to the quick when I think of Jesus and what he has done for us. Imagine being before Jesus and saying I did this, or I did that? (I mean what could possibly be worthy?) It’s a slippery slope because, for each thing I have done, there are probably a million things I have not done. It is the things I did not do that I will be accountable for, the sins of omission. In conclusion, I will simply say that while I have acted like the Pharisee, I long to be the tax collector relying on God’s mercy. The challenge for me is to take each day and realize it is the small tasks, the tasks of daily life, that are the most humbling. It is in those acts that I can serve God by not complaining but offering them up. This is easier said than done (at least for me who has never been known to be the most patient person). I do not want to be the person to cast the first stone and am only grateful that I have lived long enough to open my heart to the Lord and pray for His mercy.

**Trish Brunsing**, married, long time parishioner

**March 31 Fourth Sunday of Lent**

Luke 15:1–3, 11–32 *So to them Jesus addressed this parable: “A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, ‘Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.’ So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.”’ So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ But his father ordered his servants, ‘Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. . . . .*

**Reflection**: The parable of the prodigal son is one of the most relatable of all the stories Christ tells during his ministry. Who among us have not taken the great inheritance our Father in heaven has given us and squandered it on useless commodities of this world? Who among us have not taken something given in love and used it in rejection of that love? Indeed, it is relatable, and not in a good way. And yet, it teaches us one of the most important points of our Faith; that mercy triumphs over judgement. Many times, we are told not to condemn others because of what they do. However, we ARE called to judge *what* they do; the *sin* not the *sinner*. This is paramount in understanding the parable of the prodigal son. Yes, it is beautiful that the father gives the son a second chance. It is beautiful that the son is shown mercy. But that mercy would be a cheap and common trope if there were no judgement. The father DID judge the son’s actions. He knew the son was using the gift he had given in love for fornication and drunkenness. He knew that, by asking for his inheritance early and before the father had died, the son had in essence, told him that he preferred his father dead, not alive. The father judged the son’s actions and in judging them decided to forgive the son, despite his horrible sin. This is what is so important to understand about God’s mercy. Mercy does triumph over judgement, but judgement still plays a role, because without judgement, mercy would be easy. Without knowing what the son did, the father could have glossed over it all. He could have pretended like the son really hadn’t done anything wrong and accepted his son’s decisions as if they were part of him. Instead, the father acknowledged the son’s sins; he acknowledged the rejection of his love; he acknowledged that the son virtually told him he wanted him to die so he could have his money, and in so doing, loved him the same. He saw the sin and loved his son in spite of it. Isn’t this more beautiful? Isn’t it more incredible that God’s mercy is so great that he sees the sins within us, sees the failure within us, and still loves us? It would be much less consoling if God simply glossed over our sins and pretended, they didn’t happen. That’s not mercy, it’s denial. God is all-knowing and that is scary. But he is also Love and that makes all the difference in the world.

**Elijah Simon**, Married, Involved in Music Ministry

**April 1, 2019 Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent**

John 4:43–54

*At that time Jesus left [Samaria] for Galilee. For Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his native place. When he came into Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen all he had done in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves had gone to the feast. Then he returned to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. Now there was a royal official whose son was ill in Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, who was near death. Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.” The royal official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” Jesus said to him, “You may go; your son will live.” The man believed what Jesus said to him and left. While the man was on his way back, his slaves met him and told him that his boy would live. He asked them when he began to recover. They told him, “The fever left him yesterday, about one in the afternoon.” The father realized that just at that time Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live,” and he and his whole household came to believe. Now this was the second sign Jesus did when he came to Galilee from Judea.*

**Reflection**: Often people claim to be Christians, but they don’t truly believe God exists if He does not conjure up miracles. As Catholics, we profess our faith every week in Mass when we recite the Nicene Creed. However, how many of us truly mean what we say in those powerful words? We should always “believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth,” no matter if we see physical signs of His presence or not.

In the passage from John 4:43-54, the royal official wished for Jesus to heal his son because he knew that Jesus had some sort of “powers.” Jesus admits, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.” People then and now feel that they need to see Jesus or God complete a wonderful task in order to believe what they are really capable of. The royal official knew Jesus could help because Jesus made the water into wine, and so he sought him out. Despite everyone asking for miracles, Jesus still healed the official’s son the moment He said, “You may go; your son will live.” Jesus still helps us when we need it most; however, it doesn’t make it right to just rely on Him to save us always because that is not a true relationship, it is just a small acquaintance.

I will admit, I like to physically know the Father and Son are with me through their miraculous acts. However, I remind myself that I am always in His presence and I am being watched. These helpful reminders keep me on track of being a good Catholic. I don’t need physical signs from Jesus or God to tell me of their powers; stories in Scripture are enough proof that if I am ever in truly deep trouble, I will see salvation in one way or another.

**JT Syta**

Parishioner at St. John Paul II and Sophomore at St. Francis High School

**April 2, 2019 Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent**

John 5:1–16

*There was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem at the Sheep Gate a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, with five porticoes. In these lay a large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled. One man was there who had been ill for thirty–eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been ill for a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be well?” The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me.” Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your mat, and walk.” Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked.*

*Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, “It is the sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” He answered them, “The man who made me well told me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’ “They asked him, “Who is the man who told you, ‘Take it up and walk’?” The man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away, since there was a crowd there. After this Jesus found him in the temple area and said to him, “Look, you are well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse may happen to you.” The man went and told the Jews that Jesus was the one who had made him well. Therefore, the Jews began to persecute Jesus because he did this on a sabbath.*

**Reflection**: As I read this passage, I think about this man who has been ill for thirty-eight years. Every time the pool is stirred up, he tries to get there to be healed but someone always gets there first. I ponder if Jesus saw the determination in this man, trying time after time to get to the pool to be well. Did Jesus go to him for that reason? Did he see the determination in him? We all struggle with so much daily, not always physical but emotional too. When we pray for help, happiness, forgiveness, every day will Jesus see that same determination in us? The Jews started to persecute Jesus because he healed this man on the Sabbath. They did not understand that Jesus heals every day. This passage helps me to remember prayer every day heals me. In our busy lives we don’t always have the determination that the ill man had. I feel that Lent is a good time to renew that determination, to pray daily for healing, happiness, forgiveness for ourselves and for others.

**Joy Katra**, preschool teacher at Southtowns Catholic School. Married with 2 beautiful daughters. The St John Paul II and Southtowns Catholic School community is an important part of their lives.

**April 3, 2019 Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent**

John 5:17–30 *Jesus answered the Jews: “My Father is at work until now, so I am at work.” For this reason, they tried all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but he called God his own father, making himself equal to God. Jesus answered and said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, the Son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for what he does, the Son will do also. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything that he himself does, and he will show him greater works than these, so that you may be amazed. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also does the Son give life to whomever he wishes. Nor does the Father judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to the Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation but has passed from death to life. Amen, amen, I say to you, the hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he gave to the Son the possession of life in himself. And he gave him power to exercise judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation.” I cannot do anything on my own; I judge as I hear, and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me.”*

**Reflection**: This reflection reminds me of my own relationship with my Father. Even at my age now, I still ask my Dad for help and guidance. My work habits come from my Father. My dad still works 6 days a week and he is in his upper 70's. I see it in my own life where I work 7 days a week to help provide for my family just like my Dad did when I was growing up. I have the utmost respect for this man. He has always provided for my Mom, siblings and myself.

I connect with this one line in the mediation: "Amen, amen, I say to you, the Son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for what he does, the Son will do also" I am the first to admit I am not the most handy person around. I feel frustrated at times that I need something fixed that I am not able to fix on my own; I have to call upon my Dad to come over and fix it for me. I feel that I should be able to do it, but I don't have the skill for it.

Never though, has my Dad ever complained or said no to me. I want to be that same person for my Son when he grows up through life that he can always depend on me. In another line: "Nor does the Father judge anyone, but he has given all judgement to the Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father". I feel people get judged on how they perform or can't perform a task in life. God made us in his image and likeness. Each of us is special in God's eyes. Whether you are handy or not; everybody has a special talent.

People should be proud of their accomplishments and not feel defeated when a challenge comes upon them. They should meet that challenge head on and persevere through the difficulties. Sometimes when things don't go right, I get frustrated and get that sense of "nothing ever goes right when I need I need it to!" I'm sure people have had that same feeling. My advice to you: "Don't give up" Be the person God created you to be.

**Marc Bandelian**, Principal Southtowns Catholic School

**April 4, 2019 Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent**

John 5:31-47

*Jesus said to the Jews: “If I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is not true. But there is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that the testimony he gives on my behalf is true. You sent emissaries to John, and he testified to the truth. I do not accept human testimony, but I say this so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and for a while you were content to rejoice in his light. But I have testimony greater than John’s. The works that the Father gave me to accomplish, these works that I perform testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. Moreover, the Father who sent me has testified on my behalf. But you have never heard his voice nor seen his form, and you do not have his word remaining in you, because you do not believe in the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think you have eternal life through them; even they testify on my behalf. But you do not want to come to me to have life.*

*“I do not accept human praise; moreover, I know that you do not have the love of God in you. I came in the name of my Father, but you do not accept me; yet if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe, when you accept praise from one another and do not seek the praise that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father: the one who will accuse you is Moses, in whom you have placed your hope. For if you had believed Moses, you would have believed me, because he wrote about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?*

**Reflection**: How do you testify to God? How do you describe your relationship with Jesus? Do we make time for him daily? Jesus wants us to Love him and follow him fully. He does not want us to be half in and half out. We need to accept him and let his light shine in us. At times we do not want to hear what he says because what he wants from us is not always easy to do. I pray daily that I can increase my faith, and that I can be led by this faith. We cannot see faith, we cannot be taught faith. Faith is when your heart, your mind and your soul all come together. And you give it all to Him. The question is, when Jesus knocks on your door are you going to open it?

**Joyce Jones ,** John Paul II Parishioner

**April 5, 2019 Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent**

John 7:1–2, 10, 25–30

*Jesus moved about within Galilee; he did not wish to travel in Judea, because the Jews were trying to kill him. But the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was near. But when his brothers had gone up to the feast, he himself also went up, not openly but as it were in secret.*

*Some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem said, “Is he not the one they are trying to kill? And look, he is speaking openly and they say nothing to him. Could the authorities have realized that he is the Christ? But we know where he is from. When the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from.” So Jesus cried out in the temple area as he was teaching and said, “You know me and also know where I am from. Yet I did not come on my own, but the one who sent me, whom you do not know, is true. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.” So they tried to arrest him, but no one laid a hand upon him, because his hour had not yet come.*

**Reflection**: We are told that Jesus was confining his activities to Galilee.  He did not want to go to Judea and Jerusalem because there were people there who wanted to kill him.  He knows that a time is coming when the final conflict will be inevitable, but the time is not yet.

Do we really know who Jesus is? There are many conflicting opinions out there.  We can only know the real Jesus by reading Scripture.  We can also learn a lot by prayer and contemplation.   Lent is an excellent time for us to do both and better still, to begin making it a practice that goes far beyond Lent.

I realize that Lent calls me not to be convinced in my mind but to accept Jesus in my heart. This is the kind of knowledge that Jesus values.

No matter how much I know about somebody there always remains much of which is hidden and known only to God.  I pray for a deeper reverence of those around me – especially for those I think I know well.

**Suzanne Jasinski** , married 40 years to Richard,  mother of 3 adult children.  Director of Afterschool Program at Southtowns Catholic School

**April 6, 2019 Fifth Saturday of Lent**

John 7:40–53

*Some in the crowd who heard these words of Jesus said, “This is truly the Prophet.” Others said, “This is the Christ.” But others said, “The Christ will not come from Galilee, will he? Does not Scripture say that the Christ will be of David’s family and come from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?” So a division occurred in the crowd because of him. Some of them even wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. So the guards went to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why did you not bring him?” The guards answered, “Never before has anyone spoken like this man.” So the Pharisees answered them, “Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, which does not know the law, is accursed.” Nicodemus, one of their members who had come to him earlier, said to them, “Does our law condemn a man before it first hears him and finds out what he is doing?” They answered and said to him, “You are not from Galilee also, are you? Look and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”*

**Reflection**: This passage is different.  Jesus does not speak.  The guards do. John seems to record the reaction of those whom Jesus calls. I think of the din created when people discuss a new sports figure when they arrive in Buffalo.  The sports commentators all have a take...where they grew up, their high school, college and how they ended up here. I can vividly imagine this happening in the first verse - probably standing around the water well discussing where the Christ will come from. They quote the scripture in their own way to justify their opinion.  And so, a division occurred in the crowd because of him. The guards who were sent to arrest Jesus, came back empty handed. When asked why, they responded: "never before has anyone spoken like this man." The authorities answered them asking if they too had been deceived.

Nicodemus spoke up saying, "

Does the law condemn a man before it first hears him?"

What about us?  We have been hearing about Christ and think we know Him. But do we spend time listening to Jesus himself?

**Brian P. McGuire** is married to Ellen, father of three boys - Raymond, Conor and Timmy, grandfather of two boys - Malachi and Owen, is thankfully and happily retired and involved in many parish activities.

**April 7, 2019 Fifth Sunday of Lent**

John 8:1–11 *Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She replied, “No one, sir.” Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more.”*

**Reflection**: You walk into a crowded place, maybe your favorite store, restaurant or attraction and someone walks up to you and says “this person was caught in the act of adultery”. Everyone stares at you. Embarrassed, betrayed, hurt you look around and feel everyone judging you.  All eyes turn to the one in charge, Jesus, to get Him to condemn you too. Instead, He looks at you with compassion and love, something that you haven’t felt in a long time.  He turns to the crowd and tells them whoever is without sin can throw the first stone.  No one moves.  Like Jesus, we have to show compassion to everyone around us and extend the same mercy Jesus showed to this woman.  We do not want to feel like this woman, ashamed and scared, but rather supported and cared for. We all have sins in our lives, none of us are perfect.  But we have the best hope of all in Jesus!  He is the one who looks at us with love and compassion.  He is the one who is able to help us be the best versions of ourselves. His love and mercy allows us to feel his arms wrap around us during the difficult times and the good times!  He is always there for us.

**Darcy Zappia** who is a third-grade teacher in the school. She had worked for 13 years as a teacher, but also has spent several years teaching RCIA and has been active in serving her church community by Lectoring and being a Eucharistic Minister.

**April 8, 2019 Monday of Fifth Week of Lent**

John 8:12–20

*Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” So the Pharisees said to him, “You testify on your own behalf, so your testimony cannot be verified.” Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I do testify on my own behalf, my testimony can be verified, because I know where I came from and where I am going. But you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by appearances, but I do not judge anyone. And even if I should judge, my judgment is valid, because I am not alone, but it is I and the Father who sent me. Even in your law it is written that the testimony of two men can be verified. I testify on my behalf and so does the Father who sent me.” So they said to him, “Where is your father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” He spoke these words while teaching in the treasury in the temple area. But no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.*

**Reflection**: Jesus tells us in today's reflection that he is "the light of the world," and whoever follows him "will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." In this brief reflection, I would like to point out what my spiritual director once taught me. In life there are things that are of *the light* and things that are of *darkness.* Basically, there are things that are of Jesus and things that are of the spirit opposed to Jesus. Some examples of characteristics that are *of Jesus* are: joy, peace, tranquility, charity, love, and hope. Some examples of characteristics that don't come from Jesus's spirit are: wrath, anxiety, worry, hatred, and despair. Where does this reflection fit into your life? For me.... I am a worrier, when I am alone and caught up in my own thoughts I often begin to worry too much, and begin to feel anxious and overwhelmed. I have to remember that anxiety doesn't come from Jesus, and in these moments of worry and anxiety I have to remember to trust in him and give him my anxiety. Knowing that in return he wants me to feel his peace. For He is the light that overshadows the darkness, and the darkness cannot overshadow His light. AMEN!

**Robert Contarin**. I'm the transitional deacon for this wonderful community as of September 15, 2018- May 31, 2019. I enjoy soccer, and all sports, and at times my sweet tooth can be overwhelming. My favorite icon is Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and St. John Paul II, used to go skiing often when he was the Pope in my Mom's home province of Ovindoli. So, between Our Lady of Perpetual Help and Saint JP2, I have landed in the perfect parish.

**April 9, 2019 Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent**

John 8:21–30

*Jesus said to the Pharisees: “I am going away and you will look for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come.” So the Jews said, “He is not going to kill himself, is he, because he said, ‘Where I am going you cannot come’?” He said to them, “You belong to what is below, I belong to what is above. You belong to this world, but I do not belong to this world. That is why I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins.” So they said to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “What I told you from the beginning. I have much to say about you in condemnation. But the one who sent me is true, and what I heard from him I tell the world.” They did not realize that he was speaking to them of the Father. So Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM, and that I do nothing on my own, but I say only what the Father taught me. The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to him.” Because he spoke this way, many came to believe in him.*

**Reflection**: Do you believe in heaven and hell? I do. Does God send people to hell or does He forgive them if they are sorry for their sins? Jesus died for our sins. Why did He have to die because of us? Why did the Father make Him suffer so much? I don’t know why but I find it hard to believe that one man had to suffer so much. We all have our problems and sufferings. I think a few prayers and belief in God always helps us.

**Caroline Strozyk** – Widow, 7 grandchildren, 6 children, one deceased.

**April 10, 2019 Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent**

John 8:31–42 *Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him, “If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will become free’?” Jesus answered them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. A slave does not remain in a household forever, but a son always remains. So if the Son frees you, then you will truly be free. I know that you are descendants of Abraham. But you are trying to kill me, because my word has no room among you. I tell you what I have seen in the Father’s presence; then do what you have heard from the Father.” They answered and said to him, “Our father is Abraham.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works of Abraham. But now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God; Abraham did not do this. You are doing the works of your father!” So, they said to him, “We were not born of fornication. We have one Father, God.” Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and am here; I did not come on my own, but he sent me.”*

**Reflection**: The word is the truth of Christ laws that are written through his disciples. For teaching those who will listen. Listeners who abide in the word of God understands the truth and those who continue to obey the word become disciples or learners. One who abides in the word of God knows the truth and are free from the bondage of sin. However, Israel – often called the people of God of Abraham and have never been enslaved by anyone. Jesus answered them, everyone that commits a sin is a slave of sin. By a slave of sin, Jesus was speaking of spiritual slavery, not a physical bondage as was Israel under the Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians under the power of Rome. A slave was not a permanent resident of a house. A son was a family with privileges forever. Our son here is Jesus Christ. Abraham’s descendants may have been physical heirs of Abraham; however, they were not spiritual descendants unless they had faith.

The Pharisees believed that as descendants of Abraham, they were guaranteed a place in heaven. Apparently, gossip had followed Jesus for many years and the Pharisees believed that he had been conceived out of wedlock. So, Jesus explained that we have one Father, God and if God is your father, you will love me for I came from God and Am Here: I did not come on my own, but he sent me (I AM).

Meditation: Dear Lord: Please allow us to live in your Word. As faithful believers in the truth of God, we know our salvation lies in living and growing your word. Everything else in this life is secondary to the Word. With your help and our knowledge of your word, we will realize more fully every day your Kingdom.

**Bob & Carol Fuchs**, Members of St. John Paul II for 3 years, members of RCIA, greeters at 8AM Mass, members of various committees, fully believes in Roman Catholic Church and teaching of Christ.

**April 11, 2018 Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent**

John 8:51–59 *Jesus said to the Jews: “Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.” So the Jews said to him, “Now we are sure that you are possessed. Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.’ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? Or the prophets, who died? Who do you make yourself out to be?” Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is worth nothing; but it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ You do not know him, but I know him. And if I should say that I do not know him, I would be like you a liar. But I do know him and I keep his word. Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad.” So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.” So they picked up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid and went out of the temple area.*

**Reflection**: When I read scripture, I always try to imagine myself there in that place at that time, listening to the conversation. It took place in the temple. It must have been crowded with many people listening. I could have been one of the Jews questioning Jesus’ teaching and saying again that he is possessed by the devil. But it seems they were judging by worldly standards of measured time and the natural process of ageing, that all men eventually die. Maybe, I would have asked the same question. Who do you make yourself out to be? When Jesus states: before Abraham came to be, I AM. He is telling everyone there in that Temple exactly who he is. Jesus uses the same name that God, our Father gave to Moses at the burning bush to tell the Jews who sent him to lead them out of Egypt and slavery.

**Renee Welsted**. My husband, Don and I have been married for 45 years. We have 3 sons, Don Jr, Mike and Erik who married our new daughter Katie in 2013. We became parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in 1981.

**April 12, 2019 Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent**

John 10:31–42 *The Jews picked up rocks to stone Jesus. Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from my Father. For which of these are you trying to stone me?” The Jews answered him, “We are not stoning you for a good work but for blasphemy. You, a man, are making yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, You are gods”‘? If it calls them gods to whom the word of God came, and Scripture cannot be set aside, can you say that the one whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world blasphemes because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? If I do not perform my Father’s works, do not believe me; but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may realize and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” Then they tried again to arrest him; but he escaped from their power. He went back across the Jordan to the place where John first baptized, and there he remained. Many came to him and said, “John performed no sign, but everything John said about this man was true.” And many there began to believe in him.*

**Reflection**: Sometimes we meet people and make quick judgements about them based on what we see in front of us. We don’t really see the real or whole person. We don’t know any of the difficulties they may be facing or have been through. We are judging them! It’s possible we see something we don’t care for and quickly form an unkind opinion of them. We may be missing the beautiful person they are, the kindness they may do for others, all the wonderful things God created in them. I think we have all done this at one time or another as I myself have done and this is something we should never do. When we make judgments like this, God will make judgements like this on us.

I try hard to see only the person in front of me. This is an on-going process for me. Speaking to the person and trying to get to know them without making any judgements. In almost every case, I find a wonderful person. I think that strangers, some who may become friends, or some who just come in and out of our lives quickly, do so for a reason. Sometimes people come into our lives to help us during difficult times or possibly we help them. We don’t always see this immediately. Sometimes we may never even realize that we may be having an effect on them, so let’s try to ensure we are having a positive effect. Showing care and compassion – what a beautiful thing!

**Dawn Tucci** My husband and I are both retired now, and we enjoy spending time with our 13 grandchildren. We have summer adventures with them that are so much fun. Besides our grandchildren, I am one of 10 kids and Len is one of 7 and we enjoy our siblings’ company also. Family is most important to us. I enjoy the wonderful, vibrant parish community at St. John Paul II. I am part of the Bereavement Ministry, and help out with funeral breakfasts, parish garden, Alter and Rosary, and the Parish People at Home.

**April 13, 2019 Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent**

John 11:45–56

*So Jesus no longer walked about in public among the Jews, but he left for the region near the desert, to a town called Ephraim, and there he remained with his disciples.*

*Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before Passover to purify themselves. They looked for Jesus and said to one another as they were in the temple area, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast?”*

**Reflection**: First, I reflected on what a barbaric time in human history this was.  The Pharisees were essentially politicians.  So politically, I could understand wanting to remove evil from the earth, but someone with a message such as Jesus’ is hard to comprehend.    I understand that they felt that sacrificing one person would save the many.  At the time; it seemed like an answer to their problem.    Little did they know that we would all be saved by Jesus’ death and resurrection.  This reflection leads me in to my own life, and how many times I have had to take my problems and offer them up to God for solution, guidance or acceptance, just like Jesus did.

I truly believe that we are all given situations that may seem challenging, unfair or even devastating, in order to grow as a person.  I know in my own case, those challenges or “problems” have had a much bigger positive role in my life than a negative.  Yes, they make everyday life harder for myself and my family, but the insight, understanding and personal growth has been immeasurable -not to mention people who know me or have heard my story.   I have been able to provide them with understanding, positivity and hope.  I honestly would not have changed a thing.  My own ddifficulties, trials and tribulations have helped me personally, to know God.  It is God that I turn to for hope and guidance.

**Lori Stoklosa**, a daughter, wife, mother of 2, worked in the Faith Formation Office of our Parish.

**April 14, 2019 Palm Sunday**

Luke 19:28–40

*So they brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks over the colt, and helped Jesus to mount. As he rode along, the people were spreading their cloaks on the road; and now as he was approaching the slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of his disciples began to praise God aloud with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen. They proclaimed: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord... “*

Luke 22:14—23:56

 *But all together they shouted out, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us.” —Now Barabbas had been imprisoned for a rebellion that had taken place in the city and for murder.— Again Pilate addressed them, still wishing to release Jesus, but they continued their shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate addressed them a third time, “What evil has this man done? I found him guilty of no capital crime. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him.” With loud shouts, however, they persisted in calling for his crucifixion, and their voices prevailed. The verdict of Pilate was that their demand should be granted. So he released the man who had been imprisoned for rebellion and murder, for whom they asked, and he handed Jesus over to them to deal with as they wished. . . . .*

**Reflection**: This is one of the long Sunday readings that includes the events from Palm Sunday through Christs crucifixion and death. As participants in the Mass, we are asked to be a part of the crowd, as we re-enact these readings. We join together in the Gathering Space with our Palms, waving them in remembrance of Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem. I would like to think that if I lived at that time, I would have traveled great distances to see Jesus, after hearing the stories of His miraculous cures and His words of love. He spoke of the Fathers’ Kingdom in a way no one else had. I wonder if I would have accepted Him or would I have been suspicious as the Scribes and Pharisees. As the readings progress, we are asked to play the part of the Crowd. Pilate wants to release Barabbas, but the crowd, possibly prompted by the temple officials, yell “Crucify him, crucify him”. I am always uncomfortable repeating these words. Would I have followed the crowd and called for the death of this holy man, who we know, is the Son of God? Even now, do I miss opportunities to support Him and do I let others condemn Him. Am I distracted by things of the todays world that do not bring me closer to Him and His Father? I wish it wasn’t true, but I know that too often, I delay or completely neglect praying or spending time in devotion. I hope that as Lent has progressed, that I have done a better job in re-directing my attention. As Holy Week starts, I want to better prepare myself for the passion and death of Jesus. There are many opportunities to allow the Holy Spirit to move us to personally experience Christs sacrifice. Most important is to celebrate the Resurrection – He is risen. He is not there in the tomb but He is with us.

**Kim Jablonski**, Married to Joe for 37 years, member of Pastoral Council, Evangelization Committee, RCIA.

**April 15, 2019 Monday of Holy Week**

John 12:1–11 *Six days before Passover Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. They gave a dinner for him there, and Martha served, while Lazarus was one of those reclining at table with him. Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair; the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then Judas the Iscariot, one of his disciples, and the one who would betray him, said, “Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days’ wages and given to the poor?” He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and held the money bag and used to steal the contributions. So Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” The large crowd of the Jews found out that he was there and came, not only because of him, but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. And the chief priests plotted to kill Lazarus too, because many of the Jews were turning away and believing in Jesus because of him.*

**Reflection**: It seems to me that even after all the miracles that Jesus performed, the Jews were still confused about who Jesus really was. They even went to their leaders to get some clarification. The Pharisees are envious of the numbers of followers that Jesus had gathered to himself. They were very fearful that they would lose their power & ultimately the identity of their nation. Thus, began the plot to put Jesus to death. We need to reflect on who we believe Jesus really is. If we truly believe He is God’s son & that we are His children, there is nothing for us to fear. By His death he gathered us into one family. We need to constantly nourish our faith, so that we truly know who Jesus is deep in our hearts.

**Lynn Ruszczyk**: I have been married for over 40 years to my high school sweetheart. We are proud parents to our 2 sons & blessed as grand-parents to our 5 grand-children. For many years, we have been active in St John Paul II Parish & Southtowns Catholic School.

**April 16, 2019 Tuesday of Holy Week**

John 13:21–33, 36–38

*Reclining at table with his disciples, Jesus was deeply troubled and testified, “Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, at a loss as to whom he meant. One of his disciples, the one whom Jesus loved, was reclining at Jesus’ side. So Simon Peter nodded to him to find out whom he meant. He leaned back against Jesus’ chest and said to him, “Master, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I hand the morsel after I have dipped it.” So he dipped the morsel and took it and handed it to Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot. After Judas took the morsel, Satan entered him. So Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” Now none of those reclining at table realized why he said this to him. Some thought that since Judas kept the money bag, Jesus had told him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or to give something to the poor. So, Judas took the morsel and left at once. And it was night. When he had left, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and he will glorify him at once. My children, I will be with you only a little while longer. You will look for me, and as I told the Jews, ‘Where I go you cannot come,’ so now I say it to you.” Simon Peter said to him, “Master, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, though you will follow later.” Peter said to him, “Master, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Amen, amen, I say to you, the cock will not crow before you deny me three times.”*

**Reflection**: God’s intentions for our lives are often not revealed to us or revealed in ways we can’t understand.  The disciples were told of the denials but refused to believe or understand Jesus.  It was a test of their faith and loyalty. Of their fortitude and grace.  In our lives God reveals plans that we may not be ready or open to understand.  He is testing our faith as well.  He gives us tasks that we may feel are more than we could carry. I am a registered nurse and I have spent some time in Haiti providing much needed medical care.  A young woman came to us, pregnant, but not near her time to deliver.  She quickly demonstrated signs of complications in her course of gestation which required immediate medical/surgical intervention.  As time progressed, she did not respond to our interventions.  The baby girl was delivered weighing barely 3#. She was struggling to breathe.  The mother continued to worsen, and we ultimately lost her. We were devastated.  How could God allow a premature struggling infant to lose her mother.  Our faith was shaken. We were mad, confused, immobilized.  We cried. We prayed.  This baby needed a mother. That night, I woke from sleep with this baby on my mind.  I felt a nudge and felt compelled to do something.  Was this God at work in me?  What was he telling me?  It came to me then, in the dark of night (divine intervention at its best) that I would adopt this child, bring her home, make her our own.  This struggling #3 baby girl is my happy, healthy daughter.  I was blindsided by God and I doubted his plan.  I could not understand what he had put before me.  With faith, tears, God’s guidance and fear I followed Christ and his plan.

**Blair Buczkowski**, married to Paul for 31 years, in addition to daughter Allison, also has 24 year old son, Nicholas who is also from Haiti.

**April 17, 2019 Wednesday of Holy Week**

Luke 4:16–21

*Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:*

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.*

*Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

**Reflection**: This passage reminds me of a time at school when the principle had a presentation about being nice to each other. She had rules that if we were being bullied, we should go to the office to tell her what happened. She would then call the oppressor down to her office. When she gave us the presentation, she told us that it would be a great year if we did that. Then when it was over, we told her we would follow the rules and we would do as she said (some kids didn’t follow those rules. I speak from experience. I was bullied a lot last year). Even though I know I could have done something myself since I study Martial Arts, I followed the rules and spoke to the principal and my family. Jesus followed the customs of the times. I knew I needed to do that too.

**David McCart**. I turned 13 on January 13, 2019 and in the 7th grade. I play drums and plan on starting a rock band.

**April 18, 2019 Holy Thursday**

Luke 4:16–21

*Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:*

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.*

*Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

**Reflection**: In 1984, when I was at a low point of my life, I was blessed with a “miracle” of sobriety. This started me on a long hard journey. At this time of my life I had a love for God but not much faith. I thought I was being punished for my past actions. I started a 12-step program that helped me understand what I was going through and was given tools, called steps, to help me through life. These steps are spiritually based and directed toward God! By God’s grace and these steps, I still remain sober these past 34 years. I was a captive set free, my eyes opened to a new way of life. Also, I feel the Lord used me to help set others free and direct them to a merciful and loving God, who gave them a new life, too. Together we experience, strength and hope, and share our life changes with others who are oppressed. God loves each and every one of us who suffer with a secret and fear others ﬁnding out. But know that our lives can be better beyond anything we thought possible.

**Jim Lafferty** St. John Paul II - parishioner

**Holy Thursday ~ Mass of the Lord’s Supper**

Gospel reading John 13:1-15

*Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean." So when he had washed their feet and put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."*

**Reflection**: Washing someone’s feet means stooping down very low and exposing ourselves to things that could be unclean. It’s a very humbling thing to do, serving someone by washing their feet. Jesus said that he gave us a model to follow. Who’s feet is God asking you to wash?

Parishioner prefers to remain anonymous.

**April 19, 2019 Good Friday**

John 18:1—19:42

*So they took Jesus, and, carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, “Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews.” Now many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that he said, ‘I am the King of the Jews’.” Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”*

*When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier. They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down. So they said to one another, “Let’s not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it will be,” in order that the passage of Scripture might be fulfilled that says: They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots. This is what the soldiers did. Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.*

*After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I thirst.” There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, “It is finished.” And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.*

*Here all kneel and pause a short time.. . . .* . . .

**Reflection**: This is the moment. This is the moment generations of God’s faithful covenantal people have waited and longed for; the moment their salvation is achieved. From the time of fall of Adam, when sin entered the world, humanity has been in need of salvation, to be set free from the slavery to sin and death. Throughout those generations, prophets called for repentance and to return to God’s ways. Their words were heeded by some and rejected by others. But now is the moment, when the new covenant is sealed with the blood of the Son of God. As Jesus hangs and dies on the cross for all, he reveals the depth of God’s love for all people and all generations. God’s love which does not and will not ever abandon us, is lift up for all to see. And in this painfilled dark moment, in this once-and-for-all sacrifice, sin is defeated.

For us, to look upon the cross, we must see the victory of love and life. We must see and find the continual invitation to give of ourselves out of love to God and to others. In our moments of darkness and despair, we must search out God’s light and faith filled with courage. Jesus’ opened arms on the cross invite us, in our sinfulness and doubt, to be embraced by God’s love. On the cross Jesus rules as the true King of Love. This is the moment when weakness and death become the victory of life and love.

***Rev. Peter J. Karalus***

*Former Pastor, St. John Paul II Parish Community*

*Diocese of Buffalo Vicar General & Moderator of the Curia*

**April 20, 2019 Holy Saturday**

Luke 24:1–12

*At daybreak on the first day of the week the women who had come from Galilee with Jesus took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb; but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were puzzling over this, behold, two men in dazzling garments appeared to them. They were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground. They said to them, “Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified and rise on the third day.” And they remembered his words. Then they returned from the tomb and announced all these things to the eleven and to all the others. The women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James; the others who accompanied them also told this to the apostles, but their story seemed like nonsense and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb, bent down, and saw the burial cloths alone; then he went home amazed at what had happened.*

**Reflection**: We have made it through the season of Lent and have found ourselves at the heart of our faith, the Resurrection! As we see the actions of the women in the Luke’s Gospel, we can ask ourselves what we would have done if we would have discovered the stone rolled away. The women announced that the tomb was empty, they gave witness; and so too are we called. The Resurrection is the single most important event that has ever happened in the history of the world, and we are called to announce it to the world. In my experience, every person I have ever met has heard of the Resurrection, but the number that believe in the Resurrection is a very different story. Many, if not all, including ourselves, act like Peter and we want to run to the tomb to see if it truly is empty. 2,000 years after the Resurrection, we still have the opportunity to visit the Holy Sepulcher in the Holy Land and see that it is empty, but for those who cannot make the pilgrimage, we have to show them that the tomb is empty by our witness to the faith. As we celebrate the season of Easter, our joy in the belief and knowledge of Resurrection should serve as testimony for others to come to believe as well.

When I am asked, and it is often, of why I have the faith I have, my response: “The tomb was, is and ever will be…empty!”

**Rev. Michael LaMarca.**

 Former Parochial Vicar, Temporary Administrator, SJPII Parish;

Pastor St. Michael’s Church, Warsaw, New York

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