God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son
so that everyone
who believes in him
might have eternal life.

A Time of Renewal
Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 15, 2015
Dear Parishioners,

When you think of a vocation crisis you might not normally think of a shortage of organists or bilingual catechetical directors. Those are just two areas where the church is experiencing a vocation crisis. (I recently found out that even if you wanted to study the organ that there are almost no universities that are even offering it anymore. Then try and find someone who can play both the piano and the organ. Almost non-existent today and relatively soon it will be a thing of the past. Amazing!)

Another critical area for vocations is the diaconate. We should probably have ten men in the formation program if we even hope to be able to properly staff the parish. The deacon has a three fold ministry of service to the altar, to the Word and to charity/social justice. We will need to rely more and more on the ministry of deacons if we even hope to be able to respond to the sacramental needs of the parish in the not very distant future.

A deacon can preach the Word of God at Sunday Mass, funerals, weddings, baptisms and other liturgical services. They teach and form adults and children, especially in sacramental preparation. They can catechize children in religious education. Deacons also assist the bishop and the priest at the altar. They have the privilege of publicly proclaiming the Gospel.

While every deacon is formed for all three ministries, the ministry that is most descriptive of the deacon is the ministry of charity and justice. The deacon is to ‘Bring the poor to the Church and the Church to the poor’. The deacon reads the Prayer of the Faithful (Universal Prayer) as one who is to be aware of the needs of the local community, of which he is a member. The deacon visits the sick and has the responsibility of bringing the Eucharist to the dying (Viaticum).

The majority of deacons are married and the vocation to the diaconate is a call for the husband, but certainly involves the wife and children. The demand on the deacon is for one of the most precious things for any of us–our time. Ordained ministry (yes, a deacon receives the sacrament of Holy Orders) can devour discretionary time in a family. That is why the support of the wife and family is so important. It would be terrible to have a good thing (being a deacon) accomplish a bad end (the destruction of marriage and family life).

If you are feeling a call to the diaconate, please come and talk with me. If you see a vocation in a man who you think might make a good deacon, encourage him to consider it and to pray about it. This is the time of year when applications are being accepted for the formation program that begins in the fall.

I have said publicly before that I would support the ordination of women to the diaconate, as was common place in the early church. We are poorer for not having the ordained ministry of women in our church. Will this be reinstated under Pope Francis? Who knows, but it is certainly worth praying about.

Peace,
Fr. David

PS: Thank you to all of you who have expressed your sympathy to me over the loss of my sister-in-law, Bridget. Please keep my brother, Bob, and his family in your prayers as they deal with this unexpected and sudden loss. May their faith be their consolation and eternal life their hope.
Above, our parish elect and their sponsors at the Rite of Election at Holy Name Cathedral. Pictured with Fr. Bill are Ellin Wheelihan, Nicole Poletti, Michael McCaskey, and Eric Wong (all wearing name tags). With them are their sponsors, Paul Ranieri, Linda Dolezal, Chuck Hilbrich and Nancy Allen.

All are invited to the Easter Vigil when the elect will be initiated through baptism, confirmation and Eucharist on Saturday, April 4th at 7:30pm. Following the liturgy, there will be a reception for everyone in the Parish Center.

As has been our custom, parishioners are encouraged to bake desserts for the reception. Baked goods may be dropped off at the Parish Center between 9am and noon on Good Friday or Holy Saturday.

Next Saturday, March 21 our elect will go on retreat. Please remember them in prayer.

Almighty God,
we give you thanks for calling
Nicole, Mick, Eric and Ellin,
to their journey in the Catholic faith.
We pray for them as they spend time
in prayer and reflection on retreat.
Bless them and all who will be with them,
that they may continue to grow
in the faith of our Church.
May the Holy Spirit,
assure them of the prayers and support
of our faith community.
Amen.

If you know of anyone interested in becoming Catholic or completing the Sacraments please contact Fr. Bill at 708-246-4404 x120

Our Lenten Journey Continues...

RCIA 2nd Scrutiny
Sunday, March 15 10:45am Mass

Crossroads Teens and 3rd/4th Graders Easter Basket Project: Today—Sunday, March 15 (See page 8 of today’s bulletin for details.)

Stations of the Cross: Friday, March 20 at 6pm

Confessions each Saturday following the 8am Mass (except Holy Saturday)

Film Series, 8 Big Problems of Life, with Laurence Freeman, OSB continues on Saturday, March 21 at 8:30am Parish Center

3rd Scrutiny
Sunday, March 22 9:00am Mass

Communal Reconciliation Service: Tuesday, March 24 at 7pm

Stations of the Cross: Friday, March 27 at 6pm

Palm Sunday Masses, March 29:
Regular weekend Mass schedule except the 12:15pm Mass begins at 12:30pm. Return your CRS Rice Bowl to church or the Parish Center

Holy Thursday, April 2
Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper 7pm

Good Friday, April 3
Stations of the Cross at Noon
The Passion of Our Lord 3pm

Holy Saturday, April 4
Blessing of Easter baskets 11am in Parish Center
Easter Vigil 7:30pm ~ Reception following in Parish Center ~ All are invited!

Easter Sunday, April 5
7:30am, 9am, 10:45am, and 12:30pm, church
9:15am and 11am, school multi-purpose room
No 5pm Mass ~ No babysitting on Easter Sunday
Background on the Gospel

The fourth Sunday of Lent is sometimes called Laetare Sunday. Laetare is a Latin word that means “rejoice.” Traditionally, Sundays are named after the first word of the liturgy’s opening antiphon. On this Sunday, the antiphon is taken from the book of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 66:10-11). Even as we observe our Lenten sacrifices, we rejoice in anticipation of the joy that will be ours at Easter.

Today’s Gospel reading is taken from John’s Gospel. It consists of two parts. The first part is the final sentence of Jesus’ reply to Nicodemus, the Pharisee who approached Jesus at night. Nicodemus acknowledged Jesus as someone who had come from God and seemed to want to be a follower of Jesus. Jesus greeted Nicodemus with the observation that one must be born from above to see the Kingdom of God. The dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus that followed was about the meaning of this phrase. Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus at every point, but there was no animosity in the questions he posed to Jesus.

In the part of the conversation with Nicodemus in today’s Gospel, Jesus referred to an incident reported in the Old Testament. When the Israelites grumbled against the Lord during their sojourn in the desert, God sent venomous serpents to punish them for their complaints. The Israelites repented and asked Moses to pray for them. The Lord heard Moses’ prayer and instructed him to make a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole. All who had been bitten by a serpent and then looked upon the bronze serpent were cured. By recalling this story, Jesus alludes to the salvation that would be accomplished through his death and Resurrection.

The second part of today’s Gospel is a theological reflection on Jesus’ words to Nicodemus. The Gospel of John is known for this kind of reflection offered within the narrative. The words of the Evangelist are in continuity with the words of the prologue to John’s Gospel. In these reflections, John elaborates on a number of themes that are found in his Gospel: light and darkness, belief and unbelief, good and evil, salvation and condemnation.

In John’s reflection, we find an observation about human sinfulness. Jesus is the light that has come into the world, but people preferred the darkness. We wish to keep our sins hidden, even from God. Jesus has come into the world to reveal our sins so that they may be forgiven. This is the Good News; it is the reason for our rejoicing in this season of Lent and throughout our lives.

Reflecting on Living the Gospel

There are two parts to this gospel, separated by the line “And this is the verdict.” The first part concerns the evidence: God “gave his only Son” in whom we choose to believe or not. The second part gives the judgment: those are saved who believe in Jesus, live the truth, and come to the light. Those are condemned who do not believe in Jesus, prefer darkness, and do “wicked things.” Our whole life is working out our own verdict. Thank God we are at the mercy of a gracious and forgiving God!

The paradox of Gospel living is that what we abhor—the cross—becomes the instrument of redemption. God saves the Israelites from death but in Gospel living we must embrace death, for the only way to eternal Life is by dying to ourselves, by allowing ourselves to be lifted up like Christ. Our good works (reaching out to others, doing our daily tasks with love and care, acting justly and charitably, etc.), then, are our way of being “lifted up,” our way of working out the verdict we hear God pronounce at the end of our earthly life. This is how we are crucified, so that we might live. This gospel, coming in the middle of Lent is a reminder of what Lent is truly about and, indeed, what our whole Christian living is about. There are only three weeks of Lent left. Now is the time to renew our resolve to embrace dying to self so that we might truly rise with Christ in joy and Life on Easter. What is the evidence of our Gospel living? What do we think is the verdict we will receive?

©Living Liturgy

May we walk in the truth of the Gospel and come to the light of Christ. May our belief in Jesus be firm and our actions be true.

In the roughest moments, remember: God is our Father; God does not abandon his children.

Pope Francis @Pontifex · Mar 10
Let us build our lives of faith on the rock who is Christ.

Pope Francis @Pontifex · Mar 7
“Life in God is like being immersed in a boundless ocean of love. No amount of sin, and no anxious clinging to lists of grievances, can overcome God’s generous love.” Pope Benedict XVI Deus Caritas Est.

For Reflection: Imagine sin as a stone swallowed up by an ocean. What stones do I wish to cast into the ocean, once and for all?

Prayer: God, You show me how to love—without condition, without clinging to past injuries. Grant me the grace today to love freely as You do today. Amen.

Dear friends, celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation means being enfolded in a warm embrace: it is the embrace of the Father’s infinite mercy. Let us recall that beautiful, beautiful parable of the son who left his home with the money of his inheritance. He wasted all the money and then, when he had nothing left, he decided to return home, not as a son but as a servant. His heart was filled with so much guilt and shame. The surprise came when he began to speak, to ask for forgiveness, his father did not let him speak, he embraced him, he kissed him, and he began to make merry. But I am telling you: each time we go to confession, God embraces us. God rejoices!

~Pope Francis

Richard Rohr Meditation
How Jesus Takes Away the Sin of the World

Humans make hard and impossible the very things we most want (see Romans 7:14-25). Such contrariness must be the meaning of any original wound or “sin.” Mean-spiritedness and hate appear to be helpful to and needed by most people, believe it or not. Negativity unites most people far more quickly than love. The ego moves forward by contraction, self-protection, and refusal, by saying no. The soul, however, does not proceed by contraction but by expansion. It moves forward not by exclusion, but by inclusion and by saying yes.

Jesus came to reveal and resolve this central and essential problem. I consider it the very meaning of the Risen Christ. There is really no other way to save us from ourselves, and from each other, until we are saved from our need to fear and hate.

Conscious love is the totally enlightened, and often entirely nonsensical way out of this universal pattern. Love has to be worked toward, received, and enjoyed, first of all, by facing our preference for fear and hate. But remember, we gather around the negative space quickly, while we “fall into” love rather slowly, and only with lots of practice at falling.

This is what Jesus did: he hung on the cross and did not return the negative energy directed at him. He held it inside and made it into something much better. That is how he “took away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). He refused to pass it on! He absorbs evil until it becomes resurrection! That’s how Jesus takes away the sin of the world.

And this is exactly what contemplative practice helps us to do. Meditation is refusing to project our anxieties elsewhere, and learning to hold and face them within ourselves and within God.

Gateway to Silence:
In Christ all things hold together (Colossians 1:17).
Many Catholics use Lent as a time to take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, particularly if they haven’t gone in a while. For me, the introspection of the season makes it a natural time to look at what areas of my relationships with God and other people are in need of some work and some healing. For me, going to confession has been a helpful way to enter into the season’s call to a joyful renewing of my heart.

One of the best experiences of the Sacrament I’ve ever had was during one particular Lent back before I entered the Jesuits. I remember it being a stunning spring day in the Bronx as I made my way over to the lovely University Church on Fordham University’s campus (yes, I’m a Ram, go John Skelton). I sat in one of the mahogany pews, praying for a moment or two before making my way to the confessional. It was there that, to my slight surprise, I found myself face to face with a fairly high-ranking member of the university’s administration. Still, a priest’s job description doesn’t change the sacrament, so we prayed together and I dove in. It bears mentioning that my sins were nothing particularly extraordinary, but, even so, the priest listened. He listened to me talk about various challenges in my relationships, my struggles to be kind and loving to friends, family, strangers. And when I finished, we talked briefly and he set me a penance.

Now, if confession weirds people out (and, oh, it can... and, yes, I just verbed the word weird), the penance part of it is what usually pushes it over the top. If the penance is perfunctory, it can seem pointless, and if not it can seem like a punishment, or some kind of a bribe we need to pay in order to earn God’s love back. I have to say, though, doing a penance after confession has always made a lot of sense to me. If I fight with one of my siblings, we’ll probably apologize to each other, but we’ll also make a point of it to spend some time together. It doesn’t make the hurt feelings disappear like my brother Jesuits when it’s time to empty the dishwasher, but it does start the process of getting back into the habits of good relationship, the habits that make us close as friends and siblings.

On this particular day, the penance showed that the priest had listened very well indeed. Not only had he heard the particular sins I had articulated, but he also heard things that I hadn’t put into words, namely, the perfectionism that preoccupied me in my life of prayer. And so, his penance was very simple: “For the rest of Lent, take 5 minutes every day – just 5 minutes – and just enjoy God.”

So I tried. And at first, it was bizarre to sit down with God with no task in mind but enjoyment. I wasn’t quite sure what to do when I wasn’t asking for answers to Big Questions, or when I wasn’t talking to God about my many character flaws. But little by little, bit by bit, I started to treasure those moments of prayer.

I’d sit in the resplendent springtime weather and marvel at nature, or at the city noises that drifted faintly onto campus. I’d bask in the laughter of friends playing wiffleball on the quad. I’d sit relished with the idea of God.

And somewhere in the midst of those five minutes I found something important. Just as I was sitting down to enjoy God, it dawned on me that God was sitting down to enjoy me. And that realization changed my life. The Best Penance Ever. By Matt Potts SJ. The Jesuit Post.

Come be enfolded in God’s embrace. Our Parish Lenten Reconciliation Service on Tuesday, March 24th will begin at 7pm in church. Song, scripture, prayer and an examination of conscience will ready our hearts and minds for this sacrament. There will be 10 priests available in church to hear individual confessions and offer absolution. The penitent then prays a healing penance prayer silently in the pew and may depart. This is a wonderful opportunity for adults and children alike to receive the sacrament.
Calling all Gardeners!

Spring is on the way and we are actively looking for new volunteers to join our Gardening Angels group. Come help keep our parish grounds beautiful, well-manicured, weed-free and watered. There are several levels of volunteerism. Confirmation candidates and high school teens are invited to participate as well.

There is a Special Projects Group that helps at one or all of the following:
- Spring Clean Up (week of March 30)
- Planting Days (anticipating May 16, 19 & 23)
- Mulching Day (anticipating June 6)

Regular Weekly Volunteers—These volunteers come to garden once each week for about two hours during the months of June-August. (Based on the number of volunteers we have, and schedule availability, we may be able to spread this out to once every other week.) Choose what works best for you.

If you would like to be a part of this dedicated and energetic group or have additional questions, contact Jan Grabacki—708-246-4610 (Home) or 630-204-5264 (Cell) - or beaconjan@aol.com

It doesn't matter if you don't know a flower from a weed—Your energy and enthusiasm is really all we need!

Welcome to St. John of the Cross Parish!

Our parish faith community welcomes these families who joined during the month of February. Contact Elizabeth Russell-Jones at 708-246-4404 x155 if you would like more information about joining our wonderful parish.

Amy and Brian Tyrrell and Family
Angela Macko
Molly and Gerald Hughes and Family
Lisa Simone Porter and Michael Porter and Family

Which is your favorite Girl Scout Cookie?

Our parish Girl Scouts will be selling their wonderful cookies after Masses again this weekend. Stop in the Parish Center to buy a couple boxes of your favorites.

Sign Up Today for our new Parish Directory. You’ll receive a FREE 8x10 portrait and a Parish Directory just by having your picture taken. We will be in the church narthex booking photo appointments before and after all Masses this weekend. Photos will be taken in April or May. You can also call the Parish Center office to schedule your appointment, or register on-line for your photo appointment and receive a $10 coupon to use toward the purchase of additional photos. Visit www.appt.lifetouch.com.

Thank YOU!! Many thanks to our Men’s Club & Crossroad Teens working together for another fabulous FISH FRY! The support and esprit de corps that exists among us is a gift and true example of serving others.
Women’s Club

Last Weekend to Donate
Over the past several weeks the Women’s Club has been collecting gently used prom dresses, shoes, jewelry, make-up and purses. Drop off your donation to the Parish Center through this weekend. These donations will be given to the Glass Slipper Project which is an organization that gives away free prom dresses and accessories to high school juniors and seniors in Chicagoland and other surrounding areas. To date, they have helped more than 18,000 young women attend their proms in style!

Crossroads

Calendar of Events
March 15  Easter Basket Service Project
March 19-22  Kairos Retreat
March 26  Stations of the Cross Rehearsal

All Parish 3rd and 4th Graders are invited to Help Make Easter Baskets Today!
Join in the fun with Crossroads teens to make Easter baskets for needy children in the Chicago area, including those involved with the Off the Street Boys & Girls Club. Teens arrive in the Parish Center at 3pm and 3rd and 4th graders at 3:30. We’ll be finished by 4:30. Please bring small treats to fill the baskets such as: little stuffed animals, small toys/cars/dolls, coloring books, crayons, small toiletries, or stickers.

Please pray for our teens attending the Kairos retreat this week.

Girls Church League Basketball
Registration for Girls Basketball is now open. Download a registration form at www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads/sports/ and register by March 20.

Youth Rally
Join teens from other parishes for music, food and inspiration on Sunday, April 12. We’ll travel by bus to St. Celestine Parish at 1:30 p.m. and return by 7:30. If your home group is not going, but you’d still like to attend, please contact Katie Hayes.

Parent Event
Parents of teenagers are invited to a speaker event on Monday, April 13 from 7:00-8:30 p.m. in the Parish Center. Guest speaker Mike Patin will help us explore creative ways to enhance the faith journey of our teens. Contact Beth Korenchan at bkorenchan@comcast.net with questions.

Job Opening at SJC
Are you a self-starter who loves to work with youth and can help us grow our ministry? We have an opening for a part-time Youth Ministry Coordinator. See our website www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads/ for details and a job description.
Youth Catechesis

Serving ~ Giving ~ Loving

Pictured below is Fr. Bill visiting with our 3rd grade students last week. Father did a wonderful job answering the children’s thought provoking questions. Also pictured are our YC K-6 students participating in Praise and Worship, learning a new song for Lent and reviewing some of their favorite songs too!

Students keep busy in the Learning Resource Center. This week, our sixth graders wrote essays based on shoes. Each student received a pair of shoes, some were sparkly, some were clown shoes, some were flip flops. On their iPad’s, they composed stories focusing around these fun shoes.

While our sixth graders wrote about their shoes, our fourth graders spent time working on book creator writing reports focusing on famous Americans. The fourth graders spend the year studying our country, researching Native Americans, the Revolutionary War, and the Industrial Revolution. They also learn each state and its capital.

“The part we liked best was choosing which service project to do. We chose Project Linus. As a family we decided what type of blanket to make and who would benefit from the blanket.” Buralli family

“The part of the lesson the children liked the best was bringing an item from their rooms that reminds them about a sacrament. They both decided on their rosary because they got “fancy” ones for their 1st Communion.” Hultman-Grelewicz family

“Receiving Jesus in the Eucharist is a special bond each week that reminds us of all he (Jesus) gave up for us.” Hiatt family

“If I invited someone to Mass I would invite my friend Annie. I would tell her that you really feel relaxed and good, and it opens your mind.” Sullivan family

YC Family Sharing Faith together with the Home Lesson:

“Shoes”

“Shoes”

“Shoes”

“Shoes”

YC Schedule

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<th>Class</th>
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<td>Classes K-6</td>
<td>10:15-11:30am</td>
<td>Sunday, Mar 15, 22</td>
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<td>6:15-7:30pm</td>
<td>Monday, Mar 16, 23</td>
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<td>FFC</td>
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<td>All work due by April 15</td>
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<td>Jr Hi Sm Groups</td>
<td>7th &amp; 8th grade</td>
<td>March 22 and 23 – on campus</td>
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<td>Special Needs</td>
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<td>Sunday, Mar 22</td>
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This week at SJC

March 17, 2015  School Advisory Board  7 p.m.
March 19, 2015  All School Liturgy    9:15 a.m.
March 20, 2015  No School – Faculty/Staff Retreat
Helping Hand Grows
Helping Hand Center, a nonprofit organization in Countryside which serves over 750 adults and children with developmental disabilities, recently purchased a 30,000 sq. ft. building at 6160 East Avenue in Hodgkins. Over $4.5mm in renovations have been completed to provide day program services for over 300 adults with disabilities who previously received services in their Countryside facility. The headquarters in Countryside will continue to serve children in the Pediatric Clinic and School for Children with Autism as well as house administrative staff. This comes at a time when the waiting list for people with disabilities in our community who need Helping Hand Center’s services continues to grow.

Could you support yourself or a family with a minimum wage job? Living in poverty make everything harder.
46 million people in the United States live in poverty; 20.4 million in deep poverty.
- 37% are families
- 50% live in suburban areas

Help Us Feed the Hungry
During the month of March our food pantry donations go to St. Mark’s in Chicago. Please remember those who rely on the pantry for their food supply.

Plan Ahead...
Prevent Child Abuse Prayer Service
Friday, April 17 at 10:30am in the Healing Garden at Holy Family Parish located at 1080 West Roosevelt Road, Chicago.

Retreat for Widowed Men and Women

The Greatest Super Power
On a lark, I forwarded an e-mail quiz entitled “20 Things You Never Knew About Me” to several friends. With 20 questions ranging from “What was your first job?” to “If you could live anywhere on earth, where would it be?,” I hardly expected a spiritual revelation in the replies.

On question 17, “If you could have one super power, what would it be?,” my other friends had answered, “to be invisible so I could sneak onto airplanes and travel the world,” or “the power to read minds so I knew who really liked me.” But Dr. Scott Chadwick, Provost at Xavier University, humbly said, “the power to make others feel loved.”

The answer stopped me in my tracks. First, why had I never thought of love as a super power? And why had I only ever thought of super powers that would benefit me? But I think what scared me the most about his answer was the realization that I could have that power if I really, truly wanted it. In fact, everyone has that power. I’m just not sure it is the power we want the most.

Ignatian Spirituality calls us to meditate on the Two Standards: the way of the world vs. the way of Christ. The way of the world begins with “me” as the starting point and seeking to define my identity through the status markers of the world such as money, power, popularity, and pleasure. The way of Christ begins with God as the starting point and seeking to define my identity in response to the love and gifts God has lavishly given me. So, under which standard would desiring the super power of “making others feel loved” fall?

Suddenly I understood Marianne Williamson’s quote, “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.” The toughest question on my quiz should have been, “You have the power to make every person you encounter feel loved. Will you use it?” Used with permission. Lisa Kelly/Ignatian Spirituality.
Thank You for Your Support of Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation

Next Saturday, March 21, St. John of the Cross Parish will receive the Kinship Award from Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR). The Kinship Award recognizes community contributions and social justice efforts that have strengthened the Precious Blood Center’s mission of providing hope, healing, and hospitality to at-risk youth in the Back of the Yards/New City neighborhoods of Chicago.

Through the pastoral leadership of Fr. David Dowdle and Bill Bright, SJC has generously shared its resources in a variety of ways to fortify hope, healing and hospitality at the Precious Blood Center. For several years, parishioners have pitched in to provide ongoing financial support and monthly donations of clothing and food, including delicious casseroles. The plants around the Precious Blood Center’s Community Vegetable Garden and Peace Flower Garden, as well as the cement for the outdoor community gathering space, are courtesy of St. John of the Cross. Parishioners not only attend fundraisers, they share their talent and expertise on the Precious Blood Center’s Fundraiser Committee. Even young parishioners have reached out: the seventh grade confirmation class wrote reflections on poetry created by incarcerated youth. Their reflections were then sent to the incarcerated authors. In addition, SJC’s Vacation Bible School is a customer of PBMR’s fledgling t-shirt silk-screening operation, which provides at-risk youths with a job opportunity.

“Through their courageous commitment and faithful support, the wonderful and generous parishioners of St. John of the Cross have demonstrated kinship with the spirituality of the Precious Blood religious congregations,” said David Kelly, CPPS, executive director of the Precious Blood Center. “Our spirituality is to build community through the inclusion of the marginalized, to walk in solidarity with those who suffer, and to seek reconciliation in a divided world.”

As part of the Kinship Award, St. John of the Cross Parish will receive a framed piece of original artwork created by a youth in one of the Precious Blood Center’s programs.

- Pictured from the top is a photo taken from a Hope and Healing Circle. Every other Sunday a group of individuals and families who have lost loved ones to violence gather in a safe place of hospitality and prayer, and through the Circle they offer each other the chance to begin healing through telling their stories.
- Fr. David Kelly, Executive Director of PBMR
- At Precious Blood art work is a powerful means of expression. Also pictured is the “Paper Bag Crucifix” and painted rocks made by young people who come to the Center.
TANIOUS’ STORY

Before civil war broke out, 5-year-old Tanious Issa and his parents lived a good life in Syria. But in 2011, the family’s house burned down and they lost everything. Like so many of their neighbors, they made the difficult choice to leave all they had ever known and move to Lebanon.

Tanious loves living in Lebanon. All he remembers about Syria is the sound of constant gunfire. But refugee life is tough. Tanious’ father can’t find a job, and the family struggles to pay for food and rent.

Catholic Relief Services is working hard to help children like Tanious enjoy childhood. That means we support schools where they can learn and play—and where there are counselors who help them work through their trauma. Most important, refugee children find friends with whom to grow and share.

This is a difficult time for the Issa family—and many others like them. That’s why we continue providing food vouchers to help meet the family’s immediate needs. Tanious and his family are grateful for the food, but are still praying for lasting peace.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING FOCUS:
Option for the Poor

Jesus tells us to care for those who are most in need in the world. He reminds us of our Christian duty to give a voice to those who are voiceless and to help those who can’t help themselves.

As a parish community we are participating in CRS Rice Bowl this Lent. Expressing our love for those in need renew our relationship with Jesus and expands our hearts in hope. We invite you to continue to pray and fast in solidarity with those who are hungry, and learn about the people who will receive help from our sacrificial contributions. Go to our parish website to see more. Bring your filled Lenten Rice Bowl with spare change to Mass on Palm Sunday, March 29.

Lord, help us to be instruments of your peace.

Catholic Relief Services is working with internally displaced people in Boda, Central African Republic, to restore dignity and livelihoods. William Martin (on the left), son-in-law of SJC parishioners Bill and Kathy Rodeghier, assists the CRS team in his role as Technical Advisor for food security. Some 3,000 Muslim men, women and children lost their cattle and homes and are now starting to rebuild their lives by farming. Donations to CRS help people of all faiths around the world.
Cherishing Each Other

For the last few weeks we have been focusing on strengthening our marriages during Lent. We’ve tried to be less selfish, stopped snapping back, and held our complaints. What if we add a small goal for ourselves every day? What if we added one positive, loving thing each day of Lent? We might hang up his clothes without complaining about it. Put the cap back on her toothpaste – with a smile. Lay out the crossword puzzle with a fresh pencil for him. Have a pot of coffee ready for her in the morning. Do some of the tiny, thoughtful things we might have done years ago, before we slipped out of the habit.

It’s not spending money, it’s a change of attention. Send him an e-mail of gratitude during the day. Tuck a note into her suitcase as she departs on a trip. A call just to say how grateful I am for you in my life. Each day we ask God for the grace to love as God loves us – without limits.

One final thing is patience. We have to learn to trust that eventually, with our constant loving and God’s grace, our spouse will notice the difference. Under the barrage of love, our spouse will begin to soften, bark less, say Thank You more. It takes time to change the patterns and it takes time for our spouse to trust in the changes. It may take months beyond Lent, but if we believe in this, pray about it and trust in God, the changes that happen in our marriages and ourselves can be dramatic.

This isn’t something for women to do for their husbands. Or husbands to do for their wives. It is what each of us as married people are called to do for each other. This is the way of life Jesus calls us to: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.”

Re-focusing our marriage invites us to be more giving, to fight our human nature that has us focused on our own needs. We are asked to stop keeping score with the ones we love and to put their needs ahead of our own. It is then, Jesus promises, that by losing our lives for his sake, we will find real life.

Creighton University. Used with permission.
Going to Heaven – By Good Luck or by God’s Grace?

_Eternity has more kinds of rooms than this world does._

This is a thought inside the head of Marilynne Robinson’s fictional character, _Lila_, in Robinson’s recent novel. _Lila_ has reason to think that way, that is, to think outside the box of conventional religious piety because her story is not one that fits piety of any kind.

_Lila_ had been an unwanted orphan, dying from malnutrition and neglect, when at a young age she was taken up by a woman named _Dolly_, herself a social outcast. _Lila_ spends all the years of her youth with _Dolly_, traveling with her as the two of them live on the edges of society and hunger, working as agricultural laborers with others like themselves, more slaves than paid workers. Living this way, _Lila_ never learns the social skills needed to function normally in society. Everything in her background, from her abandonment as a child to her life-long marginalization, sets her up to be a loner, someone condemned by circumstance to never find normal companionship, family, intimacy, or grace.

Moreover, _Dolly_, her surrogate mother, has her own problems, beyond her struggles to feed _Lila_ and herself. When she took up _Lila_ and fled from their hometown, she was fleeing domestic violence. Eventually, years later, the man from whom she was fleeing finds her; but _Dolly_ is no passive victim. She knifes the man to death. Sometime later, she dies, orphaning _Lila_ a second time.

But, by now, _Lila_ is old enough to take care of herself, except, lacking social skills, she still finds herself at the margins of society, ever the loner. Luck, though, is on her side and she is eventually befriended by a Christian minister who takes care of her and eventually marries her. This new world of acceptance, love, family, and religion is radically new to _Lila_ and she struggles mightily to sort it out, especially regarding how love and grace work. One of the problems that bother her, as she listens to her husband’s Christian sermons, is what happens to someone like _Dolly_, who did so much for her, and yet was a murderer. Is she forgiven? Could she have gone to heaven, even after committing murder? _Lila_ struggles to believe in faith, love, family life, forgiveness, and heaven.

Her thoughts on this, especially on how _Dolly_ might have met her Maker, contain their own important insights into love and grace: “In eternity, people’s lives could be altogether what they were and had been, not just the worst things they ever did, or the best things either. So she decided that she should believe in it, or that she believed in it already. How else could she imagine seeing _Dolly_ again? Never once had she taken her to be dead, plain and simple. If any scoundrel could be pulled into heaven just to make his mother happy, it couldn’t be fair to punish scoundrels who happened to be orphans, or whose mothers didn’t even like them, and who would probably have better excuses for the harm they did than the ones who had somebody caring about them. It couldn’t be fair to punish people for trying to get by, people who were good by their own lights, when it took all the courage they had to be good. … Eternity had more of every kind of room in it than this world did.”

As Christians, we believe that, as part of the Body of Christ, we have been given the power to forgive each other’s sins and that, because of that, indeed a mother’s love can pull her child into heaven. Our love for each other is a powerful vehicle of grace, powerful enough to actually open the gates of heaven. As Gabriel Marcel once put it: _To love someone is to, in effect, say: You at least will never die!_ Human love, even this side of eternity, has that kind of power. That’s also why we pray for loved ones who have died. Our love has the power to reach them, even there.

But, and this was _Lila_’s quandary: What about those who, like _Dolly_ and herself, are outsiders in this life and who die without anyone much caring about the fact that they’ve gone or where they’ve gone? How do grace and forgiveness work then? Is human love then purely out of the picture and we are left only with the hope that God’s love can fill in where human love is absent? Yes, God’s love can and does fill in where human love is absent. In fact, scripture assures us that God has a special love, and tenderness, for those who find themselves outside of the circle of human love. So we need not worry about the salvation of those who, like _Dolly_, died in less-than-ideal circumstances, even as they “took all the courage they had to be good.” Human love, while generally directed towards very specific persons, is also a symphony whose music circles wide and ultimately embraces everyone.

_Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com._
### Mass Intentions

**Monday, March 16, 2015**
- 7:45am Sylvester Ptak; Muriel Albertson

**Tuesday, March 17, 2015**
- 7:45am Patrick McNamara; Beth O’Leary

**Wednesday, March 18, 2015**
- 7:45am Roy Cook; Our Beloved Dead

**Thursday, March 19, 2015**
- St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin
- 7:45am Special Intention of the Rozsypal family; Jack Doyle

**Friday, March 20, 2015**
- 7:45am Fr. Ed Fealey; Jack Callahan, Ill

**Saturday, March 21, 2015**
- 8:00am Margaret Mary Woods; Frank Charbonneau
- 5:00pm Robert Brinkman; Mary Maska

**Sunday, March 22, 2015**
- 7:30am Ann Cadero; Frank Bilotta
- 9:00am Josephine McNamara; Lenny Kamenjarin
- 12:15pm Steven Ryan; Leonard Martyn
- 5:00pm Beatriz Cokin; Thomas Marshall

**Italics: Living**

- Pray for our Beloved Dead
- Pray for our Sick

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**Pray for our Beloved Dead**

- Louis Stork, father of Jim
- Ron Pacer, uncle of Mary Beth Drafz
- Isabel Buser, grandmother of Susie Alexander
- Bridget Dowdle, wife of Robert, sister-in-law of Fr. David
- Virginia Jangodzinski, aunt of Marguerite Chrusciel
- Pat Nebel, sister of Joan Tiernan

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**Wedding Banns**

- Nora White and Kevin Malone

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- The **Golden Wedding Anniversary Mass** will be held on Sunday, August 30, 2015, at 2:45pm at Holy Name Cathedral. Couples married in 1965 interested in attending may call the Parish Center.

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- Contact the Parish Office

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**Elizabeth Russell-Jones, Welcome**
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Rediscover what God wants you to know.

Consider Joining us and prepare to call yourself Beloved.

Amidst the busy-ness of life, you are invited to spend time deepening your roots, exploring your relationship with God and yourself, and companioning with others on the same journey. If you are single, married, widowed or divorced, religious or skeptic, hurt or healing you will be at home on our Beloved Weekend. Our hope is that, together, we can rediscover what often eludes us, but what God wants each of us to know: that you are Beloved. Learn how this knowledge will enrich your life and relationships with others and fill you with joy.

The Beloved Weekend begins on Friday, April 24 at 7pm and concludes Sunday, April 26 at 1pm, but the Beloved Weekend doesn’t end on Sunday. After the retreat you will find regular opportunities to connect with and extend the Beloved experience as part of a parish community of believers.

April 24-26, 2015

The Beloved Weekend is held at the Carmelite Center in Darien. The cost is $230 (double room) or $280 (private room). A deposit of $100 holds your spot. However, we never want cost to prohibit anyone from attending. Scholarships are available; just ask. To sign up visit www.stjohnofthecross.org or see our brochure at church exits. Questions about the retreat or scholarships can be directed to Marianne Firlit at 708-839-0377 or Andrea Gagliani at 708-246-1520.