Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life; you have the words of everlasting life.

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 23, 2015
Dear Parishioners,

This was the time of year when it happened. The Sears Roebuck truck would pull up in front of our house and the delivery man would pull this enormous box out of the back end of the truck and up the front stairs of the house. Very quickly, no matter where we were playing or what we were doing, even if we were on the next block, each of us kids would rush home to see what was ours in the big box. My mother had placed an order with Sears that would equip us for the coming school year. We must have been able to order our school uniforms through Sears (thus the big box) but uniforms were not necessarily the most important part of the delivery. What brought the smiles to our faces? New underwear!

She must have thought one size fits all tube sox were the greatest invention of all time. You didn’t have to write specific names in them like you did for briefs or school uniform shirts. At least for the seven boys sox were kind of communal. (Did we care what the five girls had to do? No.) If you could find two that matched they were yours until you decided they needed to be washed, which was about the time they could stand up by themselves. Then you threw them down the stairs to the basement with the rest of the laundry. (My mother could have, but didn’t, do laundry eight hours a day every day. There were times that going down the stairs to the basement required the skill of a mountain goat to get over the pile of laundry ascending the staircase. My poor mother.)

An enduring childhood memory is a laundry basket full of sox. When you needed a pair you just went hunting and digging through the basket until you could put a pair together. Once in a great while, I can’t remember if it was a punishment or not, the entire inventory of sox would have to get matched up. But it didn’t take long for that basket to get filled up again, a lonely sock in search of its mate. Small memories of starting a new school year from my childhood.

The parish school welcomes the children Tuesday morning. It seems like just last week that the ‘Alleluia Chorus’ was being played over the loud speakers on the last day of the school year. A busy summer draws to a close. The Garage Sale, the SJC Fest, VBS, summer projects, a few days of travel here and there and suddenly it is over. If you have a child or children at any level of education, it’s again time to trust them to the educational institution of your choosing.

There was a recent article about how fewer than a third of high school kids were able to get summer jobs this year. Between changes in the economy, tutoring, summer school, family vacations, summer camps, etc., etc., there isn’t much time or opportunity left for a kid to get a paying job. The typical low paying summer job has also become an adult’s part time or second (or third job). Valuable lessons were learned by those summer jobs; primary among them is that a good education might help prevent you from spending your life doing menial tasks for a living. But other lessons, like being on time, self initiation, responsibility, dependability, trustworthiness and giving an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay came through working in the summer.

There is school, and then there is life. Both have invaluable lessons for being a contributing member of human society, and each needs the other to bring balance. And wisdom. That comes more with age, darn it.

Peace,
Fr. David

PS We are getting close to announcing the financial results from the Carnival. In spite of getting rained out one night I think you’ll be pleasantly surprised. If you were one of the volunteers for SJC Fest I hope you have RSVPed for the thank you party this week. It will be great to see you there.
**Living the Gospel**

The choice Jesus sets before the disciples in this Gospel is deeper than simply "Do you also want to leave?" Jesus is inviting them to come to believe in who he is ("the Holy One of God" given as Bread from heaven) and what he offers (his own Body and Blood for eternal Life). Believing, however, is not mere verbal assent. It must become the lived conviction of choosing to stay with and in the risen Christ. Choosing to stay with Jesus is a way of living modeled on Jesus’ own way of self-giving living.

Choosing Jesus and his teaching requires letting go of what we know of God and allowing God to act in a whole new way toward us. Never before had God demanded so much of God’s people—to give one’s life for others. To share in Jesus’ Body and Blood demands of us this same kind of self-giving. The gift transforms us and in this it makes harsh demands on us, for we become like the Master and can expect to have done to us what the Master had done to him. Choosing to follow Jesus and accept his gift of Self to us is a challenge to see beyond the sacrifice of self-giving and continual dying for the sake of others to the Life that comes from this self-sacrifice. It is always good to remember that Jesus is the Bread of Life. Self-giving always leads to new life and this is why we are able to make the choice to stay with the Master—he has “the words of eternal life.”

©Living Liturgy

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**Background on the Gospel**

For our Gospel today we hear the conclusion of the “Bread of Life discourse” in the sixth chapter of John’s Gospel. In the preceding verses, which we have heard proclaimed in our liturgy over the past few weeks, we have heard Jesus explain that he is the Bread of Life, given so that those who believe may have eternal life. This discourse follows the miracle in which Jesus fed more than five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fish. As Jesus has been teaching these things, John’s Gospel describes a murmuring crowd unable to accept Jesus’ words. In today’s Gospel, the crowd has dwindled in number, and John no longer references them, or the Jews. Instead John describes the questioning of those considered to be Jesus’ own disciples.

Today’s Gospel first records the response of those in the crowd who are described as Jesus’ disciples. Just as the larger crowd had struggled with Jesus' teaching, these disciples also cannot accept Jesus' words. Jesus is said to know about their murmuring. He responds by acknowledging their unbelief and by reiterating that only those chosen by the Father will follow Jesus to the end. John's Gospel reports that many of those who had been Jesus’ disciples ceased to follow him at this point. The number of people following Jesus dwindled from a crowd of more than 5,000 to only 12 people. And it is to these Twelve that Jesus now turns his attention.

Simon Peter’s response to Jesus’ question as to whether those closest to him will also leave, reminds us of the reports of Peter’s confession of faith in the Synoptic Gospels. Peter announces, on behalf of all the Twelve, that they have come to believe all that Jesus has taught about himself: Jesus is the one from God in whom they have found the path to eternal life.

This conclusion of the Bread of Life discourse focuses on personal faith in the life of Christian discipleship. Each person must make his or her own judgment about who Jesus is and in doing so determine the way of life that he or she will follow. God's grace invites us to be Jesus’ disciples, but each person must respond to the grace of God and confess as his or her own the belief that Jesus is the one from God. This faith then commits us to the path of life, leading us to eternal life.

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May we choose to live as members of the Body of Christ nourished by the Bread from heaven. May we choose to live Eucharist as a concrete expression of our believing in the risen Jesus.

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<th>Monday</th>
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<td>Ps 145:10-11, 12-13, 17-18</td>
<td>Ps 139:1-3, 4-6, 11-12ab</td>
<td>Ps 139:7-8, 9-10, 14 and 17</td>
<td>Ps 90:3-5a, 12-13, 5-6, 10, 11-12</td>
<td>Ps 97:1 and 2b, 25:1-13</td>
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Parenting is one of the most rewarding and beautiful endeavors I have ever had in my life. It is also one of the hardest. I’m the Dad of two boys, both under the age of 4. I am convinced that no one is ever really prepared to be a parent. In many ways, I certainly wasn’t prepared. On the positive side, I have never experienced God more fully than participating in the process of bringing a child into the world and nurturing him. I was not prepared for how much my heart would grow in its ability to love. My sense of unconditional love has been transformed since the day my first son was born. There are stretches of days and sometimes weeks when the boys delight us with their growth and learning and affection and wonder at the world. I was unprepared for all of this goodness. Maybe that’s grace.

I was also unprepared by how hard parenting can be. Sometimes the stretches of days and sometimes weeks aren’t so much blissful as they are a grind. It is during these stretches that instead of affection, we get tantrums. Instead of wonder at the world, we get obstinate resistance. Instead of harmonious flow, life with kids can feel more like constant frustration. I’m left, often wondering, how I can find the kind of space I need to get perspective and stay balanced?

The Examen is an easy way to create some space in our days to reflect, recharge, and re-evaluate, an easy way to make space for God, for listening, for re-connecting with who you are at their deepest core. As a fellow pilgrim along the journey, who is thirsty for ways to slow down, to make meaning of the messiness of having children and for ways to stay afloat, here is a Daily Examen for Parents.

**A Daily Examen for Parents**

**THANKSGIVING**

How am I grateful for my family today? How have they loved and supported me?

**PETITION**

Before I review my day, I ask for clarity and honesty as I search for God and as I look at myself and my kids.

**REVIEW**

From my interactions with my kids today today…

What did my kids do or say that made me smile, laugh, or pause in joy?

What did they do or say that challenged or frustrated me?

How did I respond to my kids with love and patience?

How did I respond to my kids out of frustration and impatience?

When did I feel closer to them? More distant from them?

How might my kids have tried to communicate deeper needs to me underneath the surface of their actions and words?

Have I noticed God’s presence in the midst of any of this?

What might God be inviting me to consider when I reflect on these experiences in my family?

**RESPONSE**

What is my response to God who is present in the life of my family?

**A LOOK AHEAD**

As I consider my family’s day tomorrow…

How can I be an instrument of God’s love in my family tomorrow?

How can I honor the gifts of my children more fully tomorrow?

I’ll challenge myself to do this Examen at least once this week – to truly listen to my days and to the voices around me, not as just the everyday din of the mundane, but instead as constant invitations to a life of joy and meaning. I will try to grow the practice into one that I do multiple times a week, maybe even daily sometime later down the line. But I also know that with all the other pressures of parenting, I don’t need to give myself another unrealistic one. So once this week. That’s where I’ll start. I invite you to join me and, more than that, I wish you peace along the journey that is parenting. Excerpts adapted from the Daily Examen for Cultural Diversity by Debra Mooney & Cheryl Nunez. Ignatian Spirituality.

**A Parent’s Prayer**

Loving God, You are the giver of all we possess, the source of all of our blessings. We thank and praise you. Thank you for the gift of our children. Help us to set boundaries for them, and yet encourage them to explore. Give us the strength and courage to treat each day as a fresh start. May our children come to know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. May your Holy Spirit help them to grow in faith, hope, and love, so they may know peace, truth, and goodness. May their ears hear your voice. May their eyes see your presence in all things. May their lips proclaim your word. May their hearts be your dwelling place. May their hands do works of charity. May their feet walk in the way of Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord. Amen. Loyola Press
Richard Rohr Meditation

Mysticism begins when the totally transcendent image of God starts to recede; and there's also a deepening sense of God as imminent, present, here, now, within me. Augustine's line was "God is more intimate to me than I am to myself" or "more me than I am myself." St. Catherine of Genoa shouted it in the streets, "My deepest me is God!"

In other words, the One Beyond is also one with me. The delight is total.

You must overcome your primary alienation to know truly—and what you learn is that the Beyond One is doing the knowing through you! You are not alone. The gap has been overcome from the other side. God is no longer "out there." At this point, it's not like one has a new relationship with God; it's like one has a whole new God! "God himself is my counselor, and at night my innermost being instructs me," says the Psalmist (16:7).

The mystics are those who are let in on this secret mystery of God's love affair with all souls, but with their soul in particular; and that God loves me just as I need to be loved. It's absolutely our unique love affair, and that sets the whole thing on a different and deeper ground than mere organized religion can ever achieve by itself.

Prayer: My deepest me is God!

So then where do we go? That question is the beginning of the spiritual journey, which we see in this distinction between the three states of mind: living in the past, living in the future, living in day-dreaming. None of these gives us peace, deep satisfaction or happiness. We can't feel the spring of joy and pure happiness in any of these states of mind. So where do we go? Is there peace? Is there joy? Do we look for it outside, and if so, where? Eventually, this search and discernment that it involves will lead us back to the only place where we do find God, which is here, and the only time and the only moment where we can experience God, which is NOW.

(Laurence Freeman, Meditation Talks 2005A)

Gracious God, hear our prayers.

Do not let us be discouraged by the crosses in our lives, but let us always carry on in hope in the certainty of your Son's words of spirit and life.

In his name we pray. Amen.

Adult Volunteer Opportunities

In order to share our Christian Catholic faith with our teens in all of the possible expressions, the Parish Teen Program, Crossroads, is looking for a few additional adult volunteers. If you are interested in the future Church, our teens, we would love to have you join us on our Crossroads Leadership Team.

There are short term opportunities:
- Kairos Retreat Team members
- Freshmen – Sophomore Retreat Team members
- 8th grade Day of the Spirit Retreat Team members

There is a 3 month opportunity:
- Freshman Experience Team member

There are 1 year opportunities:
- IGNITE Gospel Reflection Coordinator
- Service Coordinator
- Social Coordinator

And finally, there are 3 ½ year opportunities as Home Group Leaders!

Pray about your availability & commitment and contact:

Terry Stadler at 708-2463838 or tjs47@att.net

with any questions or to say ‘Yes’ to our parish teens. We look forward to hearing from you and having you join us and guiding our teens in the development of the faith and their relationship with God.
The flame continues to burn bright with Ignite!

All Crossroads teens and non-Crossroads teens (of any faith) are welcome to join us at our Ignite sessions that will continue into September! This student-led faith-sharing group discusses a gospel reading each Wednesday night about how it relates to our lives. If you want to get closer to God, reading His word each week is a great way to do it. Make sure to check it out if you haven’t yet!

We break into small groups every Wednesday from 7:30-8:30pm in the Parish Center.

Crossroads registration is open to all high school parish teens. Our twice a month (September – May) teen meetings are not religion classes. We are not trying to lecture the teens about the commandments, Sunday Mass or even the Bible. And yet, in informal conversations, our committed volunteer adults share their faith with the teens, answer their questions about life and faith, and help them grow as they continue to develop their own relationship with God. In doing so, the teens do discuss Christian virtues, the Mass and applications of the Bible to their life in high school.

Please contact the Parish Staff at 708-246-4404 if you have any questions. Register online at www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads

As a new high school freshman (or a new HS parent), St. John of the Cross (SJC) Parish would like to invite you to discover the world of Crossroads here at SJC. The mission of the SJC Crossroads Youth Ministry is to embrace teens in our vibrant and caring parish community and meet them where they are by providing opportunities for them to:

- Grow in their relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit
- Build a community with other Catholic teens
- Learn more about their Catholic faith
- Develop leadership abilities by serving others
- Have fun in a faith-filled environment

Crossroads registration is open to all high school parish teens. Our twice a month (September – May) teen meetings are not religion classes. We are not trying to lecture the teens about the commandments, Sunday Mass or even the Bible. And yet, in informal conversations, our committed volunteer adults share their faith with the teens, answer their questions about life and faith, and help them grow as they continue to develop their own relationship with God. In doing so, the teens do discuss Christian virtues, the Mass and applications of the Bible to their life in high school.

Please contact the Parish Staff at 708-246-4404 if you have any questions. Register online at www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads

Sunday Night Choir – “5 Alive”

Are you a high school/college/young at heart adult aged person looking for a way to get involved in music at St. John of the Cross? SJC’s Sunday night 5:00pm Mass is looking for you! We practice at 4pm and sing at 5pm. No regular commitment is needed – you only come when it works for you! Start date is Sept. 13. Questions? Call or email Ann Bourjaily-Maney at (708)246-4171 or bourjman@sbcglobal.net or visit the 5 Alive Facebook page.

Crossroads Freshmen & Parent Orientation

Sunday, September 13, 6 – 8 pm
Teen Space in the Parish Center

Calling all Freshmen teens (and their parents)!! You are invited to join us as the Class of 2019 and experience the St. John of the Cross High School Program, called Crossroads (CR). This evening is for all Freshmen and their parents to discover and experience what Crossroads can mean to you, your faith life and your relationship with God.

We will gather in the lower level of the Parish Center immediately after the 5 pm Mass on Sunday, September 13. We’ll open the evening together (teens and parents) with a short prayer and then divide into two groups: the teens will experience what an actual CR meeting looks like while the parents will receive important CR information and schedules, ask their questions and discuss the mission and value of Crossroads. As the evening comes to an end, we’ll rejoin the teens with their parents for a closing prayer and PIZZA!

Whether you have registered yet for CR or not (and we hope you do so soon by visiting our website www.stjohnofthecross.org/crossroads), please plan on joining us on Sunday, September 13 at 6pm in the Parish Center.
Parish News

St. John of the Cross Parish congratulates the following families who had their infants baptized last Sunday. Pictured on the left with godparents and Fr. David are Ben and Melisa Marotta with infant, Nicolas Mateo, and Jonathan and Alyssa Moog with infant, Matthew Douglas. Pictured above are Fr. Terry Keehan with godparents and parents, Michael and Kathryn Dahl, holding infant, Emmett Nash, and big sister, Mary.

Welcome Back Teachers and Students!!

Teachers returned to SJC this week to begin preparations for the 2015-16 school year. After a series of meetings, they spent quite a bit of time in their classrooms getting them ready for the students. We are very excited to start the school year. Don't forget to join us in the parking lot after drop off on the first day for the Annual First Day of School Tailgate!

This Week at SJC
Monday, August 24 Meet the Teacher Night School 7-8pm
Tuesday, August 25 First Day of School—1st-8th Grades
Wednesday, August 26 First Day of School—Kindergarten
Thursday, August 27 First Day—Pre School

Before your wonderful memories of the 2015 SJC Family Festival fade away, the 2016 Planning Committee would like to gather your feedback on your experience at the Fest. Please take just a few minutes (there are less than 10 questions!) to answer these questions to give us valuable feedback on making next year’s Fest even better! Go to the link below to get started:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YGQZM37

Stop praying if things don't go your way. #ThingsJesusNeverSaid James Martin, SJ @JamesMartinSJ Aug 18

God really doesn't care what you do. #ThingsJesusNeverSaid James Martin, SJ @JamesMartinSJ Aug 18
Opportunities to Donate Goods
Donations may be brought to the Parish Center lobby.

Nonperishable Food for Kolbe House Pantry
Due to space constraints, Kolbe House is not currently able to accept additional donations of clothing and toiletries. Kolbe could use the following food items to restock their food pantry: pancake mix, syrup, powdered milk, small packages of rice, and small packages of beans.

Towels and Sheets
Donate gently used or new towels and sheets (especially twin size) for Sharing Connections and BEDS Plus.

Backpacks and School Supplies
Backpacks and supplies for high school aged students for Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation.

Gym Shoes
New or gently used gym shoes for both kids and adults for Sharing Connection and Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation.

YOU Can Make a Difference!!
SJC Church Narthex Food Pantry Collection
During the month of August our food donations will be delivered to the food pantry at St. Cletus. Remember to bring nonperishable food with you when you come to Mass to help feed the hungry.

CURE Network
General volunteers, nurses, nursing assistants, interpreters, optometrists, ophthalmologists, dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants are needed to help at a two day clinic on September 18-19 in LaGrange. Register to volunteer at www.curenetwork.org. Call CURE Executive Director, Karen Carroll at 877-278-7631 with questions.

Our parishioner, Dr. Ken Nelson, is founder and chairman of CURE Network. The CURE (Collaborative Underserved Relief and Education) Network was created to meet the vital and ever growing need to bring free specialty medical services to the underinsured and those without insurance in the greater Chicagoland area. Since its inception in 2010, CURE Network has proudly provided over $2,700,000 of free medical, dental, and vision care to over 4,000 patients.

St. John of the Cross Family Fest Special Needs Event was featured in the Helping Hand summer newsletter. Thank you to Fest volunteers who made this day possible!

When we experience the merciful love of the Father, we are more able to share this joy with our neighbor. Pope Francis @Pontifex Aug 17
Through your generosity St. John of the Cross Parish partners with our Sharing Parishes and numerous nonprofit organizations in our community. Here are some of the beautiful thank you notes we have received.

**Dear St. John of the Cross Parish,**

I write to acknowledge receiving the $1500 sharing check. To thank you does not really express my heartfelt appreciation, not only for the financial support, but also for the many ways that you help us. The food, Christmas help, clothes and so much more form a litany of reasons why I am thankful.

With a new Pope and Archbishop of Chicago we are seeing and witnessing a change in the Church. Certainly the body of truths that we all profess is the same. What is different are the examples that we are being given in how to live those truths. The needs of the incarcerated have been highlighted by the Pope and by the recent visit of the Archbishop to Cook County Jail. We are all called to minister, accompany, and serve the needs of poor among us.

I see this happen when a person in prison will send Kolbe House a donation from their commissary money. This person sees the needs of others besides his own. All of our efforts, whatever they are, weave us together to form one Church.

My heart is thankful for the friendship that has been formed between the parishioners at SJC and Kolbe House and our common bond.

Rev. Arturo Perez Rodriguez
Director of Kolbe House
Catholic Jail Ministry at Assumption Church

**Dear St. John of the Cross Parish,**

We extend a heartfelt thanks for the generous donation of food for the St. Barbara Food Pantry/Lending Closet in July. As a result of your donation, we were able to help those in need with nourishment and provide hope that they are not forgotten. It is only with the help from generous and caring people like you that we are able to continue to minister to the needs of so many who are experiencing difficult times and are seeking our help. Thank you for answering that call and joining our mission.

Aida Gatch
Director
St. Barbara Food Pantry/Lending Closet

**Dear St. John of the Cross Parish,**

It has been a busy summer with youth in multiple programs and a variety of activities. None of this could be done without your support and care.

Your parish community has been such a support to our work. Thanks for your friendship and your generous heart. Whether it be the financial help that is so important, the food and clothing, or the homemade lasagna that feeds the youth, your generosity is truly appreciated.

We value our partners in the work, but your parish has enabled us to live out the Gospel message of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and consoling those who are struggling. Words seem wholly inadequate, but I hope you know how much we appreciate your friendship.

Thanks for making this summer one that is filled with joy—even in the midst of some tragic moments. I pray you have a safe and restful summer.

Rev. Dave Kelly
Director
Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation

**Dear St. John of the Cross Parish,**

On behalf of the board of directors of Interfaith Community Partners, I am extending a heartfelt thank you for the contribution of $2000. It is with humble gratitude that we accept this, and it affirms our hope that the services that our loyal and gracious volunteers provide are much needed in our communities. ICP is honored to be partners with SJC and are blessed to have the time and talent of many caring parishioners as volunteers and board members. Your generous donation is truly appreciated and makes an enormous difference. Together we can continue to provide personal, loving care for older adults.

Aileen Pendleton
Director ICP
Children’s Choirs
Did you know that SJC has two choirs available to all children in the parish? Mark your calendars as you schedule your kids for fall activities! Questions? Contact Ann Bourjaily-Maney at (708)246-4171 or bourjman@sbcglobal.net.

Cherub Choir serves children in grades 1-3 and practices on Wednesdays from 3:45 – 4:30pm in the church. The start date is Sept. 9th with registration and a brief parent meeting at 4:20pm in church.

NEW THIS YEAR: 1st Graders will practice on Wednesdays in church, but separately from the 2nd and 3rd graders. Their practice time will be 3:45 – 4:30pm.

Youth Choir serves students in grades 4-8 and practices on Thursdays from 3:45 – 4:30pm in the church. The start date is Sept. 10th with registration and a brief parent meeting at 4:20pm.

Adult Choirs
Traditional Choir rehearsals resume Wednesday, September 9. The Traditional Choir sings at the Sunday 10:45am Mass.

Contemporary Ensemble rehearsals resume Thursday, September 10. The Contemporary Ensemble sings at the Saturday 5pm Mass.

Refreshment and fellowship at 7:00pm and rehearsal begins at 7:30pm in church.

What’s the adult music ministry at SJC all about?
Both adult choirs are fun, supportive, and social groups who pray together and aim to foster prayer in our community through our love of music. No previous experience or music-reading skill required – just a desire to sing praise to the Lord!

If you are interested in attending a rehearsal or want to find out more about Music Ministry, please contact Jessica Koch, Director of Music Ministries: jkoch@stjohnofthecross.org

Becoming Catholic
Learn about the Catholic faith. Join our community. Discover what a life of faith is all about. Explore how Jesus may be calling you into his life in a deeper way. RCIA or the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is open to those never baptized or baptized in another Christian faith or those baptized Catholic, but who have not received First Eucharist or Confirmation. Now is the time to give Fr. Bill Vollmer a call to learn if RCIA is for you. Call 708-246-4404 x120.

7th Annual BBQ & Bags Tournament
All men of the parish are invited to our kick off event of the year on Friday, September 4 at 6pm on the Parish Center East Lawn. Food and beverages are provided by the Men’s Club. Bring a lawn chair. Invite a neighbor. Connect with other men in our parish. RSVP To Dan Montgomery at tdm30550@gmail.com or call 312.952.1435.
“Always be prepared to give a reason to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence” 1 Peter 3:15.

Why is Spiritual Enrichment a key pillar of the SJC Men’s Club? The easy answer is that we are part of a Catholic parish and tradition -- but there has to be more. What responsibility comes with being a member of the Catholic Church and the SJC parish? Mike Baron, Chair of the Men’s Club Spiritual Enrichment Committee, recently gave some thought to this question.

In today’s relativistic secular culture, it is increasingly difficult to engage people in conversations about our spiritual or supernatural human nature – to develop common ground on WHY this even matters. It is equally difficult to engage in civil conversation around hot-button topics -- most conversations among men involve sports. To avoid being categorized and dismissed as either completely ignorant or blindly obedient* to the often misunderstood so-called “rules” proscribed by the Church, we must study and understand what our faith teaches and why.

At the end of the day, Catholicism - and Christianity in general -- is based on the Person of, and our individual personal relationship with, Jesus Christ as Trinitarian God. But, at the beginning of the day, it has to matter to you. How does one get there?

- We have all heard the answer before: we need to develop a deeper and deeper relationship with Jesus Christ by spending time getting to know Him, like any relationship that we value. We get to know Him through His Word (Bible), Sacraments and studying the deposit of faith left by Him and guarded by the Magisterium of His Church. But getting there requires time, desire and commitment. Just as we spend time exercising or playing a sport to keep our bodies fit; or studying stocks, bonds, or financial markets to keep our finances fit; or studying the stats of our favorite teams in the sports section to engage our friends in conversation or debate; we MUST dedicate time to developing and maturing our spiritual nature.

Once we get more comfortable that we KNOW Jesus, it becomes easier and easier to share … in fact, to WANT to share that knowledge, with other individuals that we care about. This is sometimes called evangelization. My sister-in-law was the spark that ignited my flame 15 years ago. She gave me a copy of Surprised by Truth: 11 Converts Give the Biblical and Historical Reasons for Becoming Catholic by Patrick Madrid (editor). I took notes on what the converts had read and studied that led them to believe in the truths of the Catholic faith and then started reading for myself. That spark ignited a fire that has since turned in to a blaze. And in God’s tendency for abundance, the more one reads and learns, the more obvious it becomes that there is so much more to read and learn and further realize that the beauty and truths of faith contain answers to literally EVERY question ever posed by humanity. The greatest minds in world have come from and written about our faith tradition. There are several lifetimes of printed gold to sift through but we only have one lifetime -- so get started now! One way to get started is to check out one of the upcoming SAM gatherings (SAM: Spirituality Among Men).

I always recall Fr. Barron’s homily about the woman at the well. Jesus spent time speaking to her about all the truths of her life. After questioning Him and intently listening, she became convinced that He was no ordinary man and ran off to tell everyone in the town about Him and what she had learned. Fr. Barron’s point … she had (and we must have) a true CONVERSION to Jesus, only THEN was she (and will we) able to go off and confidently proclaim Him to others, or … evangelize. This, is our baptismal call.

Yes, I agree with Matthew Kelly’s often used quip that, “there is GENIUS in Catholicism!” Discover it for yourself then spread the Word.
Peace      Michael D. Baron

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**SAM (Spirituality Among Men)**

**First a Priest Shortage, Now a Shortage of Laity?**

One of the greatest gifts that came out of Vatican II was the Church’s teaching on what it means to be a lay person in the Catholic Church. Up until Vatican II, to be a lay person meant that you were NOT something, i.e. a cleric. But Vatican II clearly defined what it means to be a lay person and it is now our time to step up.

However, recent statistical trends show that American Catholic lay people are leaving the ranks. In fact, according to a recent Pew Research study, while the #1 single religious denomination in the United States still is Catholicism, #2 is the group now referred to as “former” Catholics.

- What are these trends telling us?
- What is the story behind the numbers?
- Decline of priest and parishes?
- Lack of sound catechesis after Vatican II and loss of orthodoxy?
- Little serious ownership of faith on the part of adult Catholics?
- Or too much stress on orthodoxy and too little on the signs of the times?
- What are the issues that may be driving our brothers and sisters from our community?
- What is our role as lay people to build bridges and bring them home?

Please join us on: **Saturday, September 19, at 9:00am**

in the Parish Center to share our common concern about the future of our Church. As part of our discussion, we will identify the issues behind the numbers and then continue our discussion about these key issues during our October 17th gathering.

If you are a man of the parish who is looking for others to share your concern about our Church and your role in the continuation of Christ’s mission, please come join us on September 19 and/or October 17. Through baptism we became Catholic Christians. Through fellowship, we sustain our faith and the Kingdom, until He comes again.
Parish News

SJC Saintly Senior Club Planning Committee
The mission of our Saintly Senior Club is to support all parish seniors by providing opportunities that foster spiritual growth and fellowship. Throughout the year the group hosts four luncheons with entertainment as well as other special programs or trips. Our Saintly Senior Club is looking for some help planning activities for the coming year. If you can help out please call the Parish Center front office with your name/phone number. Volunteering is a great way to help others right in our community as well as meet new people.

THE FIRST 60 SECONDS:
Win the Job Interview Before It Begins
Interfaith Career Network invites you to a powerful presentation on Thursday, September 3 from 7-9 pm. Our speaker, Dan Burns, is the author of The First 60 Seconds and has helped thousands of people to be more successful in their job search efforts. Dan will facilitate a discussion that focuses on understanding what the hiring manager wants and your keys to success, preparing and presenting a "winning" resume and credentials package, and effectively managing the first 60 Seconds and the interview to get the job you want. This meeting is open to everyone and there is no cost to attend. Please join us at St. Cletus. www.interfaithcareernetwork.org.

Fr. Harry’s Opera Prep Class
Fr. Harry is bringing a group of parishioners to see the opera, The Marriage of Figaro, on Wednesday, October 21 at 2pm at the Lyric Opera House. Join him on Wednesday mornings from 9-11:30am in the Parish Center beginning September 9—October 14 as he teaches about this opera so that all attending may understand and enjoy. Sessions are open to everyone. Call Fr. Harry with questions or to attend the opera at 708-853-9064.

Fall Ministry Training Dates
Minister of Care
Adults interested in serving as a Minister of Care to the aged and infirm in hospitals and at home are invited to attend a four session training program at Carmelite Spiritual Center on:
- September 15, 17, 22 and 24 from 7-9:30pm or
- October 6, 8, 13, and 15 from 9-11:30am
The sessions will cover the theological, pastoral, and practical aspects of ministry to the sick. A fifth session will be held at the parish to cover information specific to serving at our parish. The cost is covered by the parish, however, registration is required by emailing Steve Weigand at sweigand@stjohnofthecross.org.

Communion Minister
Students who are sophomores in high school and older and adults interested in serving as a Communion Minister are invited to attend a training session to be held in church on:
- Sunday, September 20 from 3-4pm or
- Thursday, September 24 from 6:30-7:30pm.
No registration is required. Training will begin promptly.

Altar Server
Training for new altar servers will be held in November. Watch the bulletin for details.

Chicago Catholic Scripture School
Year II Basic Bible Study this fall on Wednesday evenings beginning September 9th in the Parish Center.

Fall Adult Study Groups
Spirituality of John of the Cross Study Group
3:30pm on Wednesdays beginning September 16. Contact Sr. Joyce for info 708-559-2954.

Little Rock Scripture Study
Ten Mondays at 1pm. Word of God at Vatican II and Book of Wisdom. Contact Roberta Gilbert at bertageorge@gmail.com or Chris Sulak at 708-246-4784.

Mary’s life shows that God accomplishes great deeds through those who are the most humble. Pope Francis @Pontifex Aug 15
Spiritual Direction
Marianne Firlit is a certified Spiritual Director who has an office in the parish rectory. Spiritual Direction can help you see God’s presence in loss, grief, anger or fear, can help you make an important decision in light of God’s grace, and grow in gratitude and joy through deeper prayer. Contact Marianne through the Parish Center office or email her at mgfirlit@stjohnofthecross.org

Counseling
Individual, couple and family counseling is available through Catholic Charities Holbrook Center throughout the Chicago area. To make an appointment call 312-655-7725. Through the LOSS Program, Catholic Charities also provides counseling and programming to adults and children who are grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide. Call 312-655-7283. Our parish rectory has a Holbrook Center-LOSS office.

Grief Support Groups at Loyola
Share your unique journey
Grow through listening and working with others
Understand normal grief reactions
Move through the grief process
Begin to heal, not to forget, but to heal

General Journey Toward Healing
For adults grieving the loss of a loved one. 6 consecutive weeks beginning September 21 from 10am –noon.

Motherless Daughters Group
For adult women who are grieving the loss of a mother. 6 consecutive weeks beginning September 15 from 6:30-8pm.

Loss of an Adult Child Group
For adults who have lost a child over the age of 18. 6 consecutive weeks beginning October 15 from 6-7:30pm.

Young Widow/Widower Group
For adults 50 years of age and younger who are grieving the loss of a spouse. 6 consecutive weeks beginning September 15 from 6-7:30pm.

Questions? Call or email Marie Gerken at marie@gerken.org 708-246-6198 or Tiffany White at tfoxwhite@gmail.com 630-745-0474
Just because something is politically-correct doesn’t mean that it might not also be correct. Sometimes we have to swallow hard to accept truth.

Some years ago, I served on a Priests’ Council, an advisory board to the bishop in a Roman Catholic diocese. The bishop, while strongly conservative by temperament, was a deeply-principled man who did not let his natural temperament or his spontaneous feelings dictate his decisions. His decisions he made on principle, and sometimes that meant he had to swallow hard.

At one point, for example, he found himself under strong pressure to raise the salaries of lay employees in the diocese. The pressure was coming from a very vocal group of social-justice advocates who were quoting the Church’s social doctrines in the face of protests that the diocese could not afford to pay the kind of wages they were demanding. Their cause also leaned on politically-correctness. This didn’t make things easy for the bishop, given his conservative temperament and conservative friends.

But he was, as I said, a man of principle. He came one morning to the Priests’ Council and asked the priests to give him a mandate to give the diocesan employees the wage increase they are demanding. The Priests’ Council told him that they would not bow to political-correctness and voted against it. A month later, the bishop came back to the Priest’s Council and asked the priests again for their support, prefacing his request by telling the priests that, should they vote against it again, he would do it on his own, invoking executive privilege. One of the priests, a close personal friend of his, said: “You’re only asking us to do this because it’s politically correct.” The bishop answered him: “No, we’re not doing this because it’s politically correct. We’re doing it because it is correct! We can’t preach the gospel with integrity if we don’t live it out ourselves. We need to pay a living-wage because that’s what the gospel and Catholic social doctrine demands – not because it’s politically correct.” In saying this, the bishop was swallowing hard, swallowing his own temperament, swallowing his friend’s irritation, and swallowing his own irritation at having to bow to something that was presented as politically-correct. But principle trumped feeling.

And principle needs to trump feeling because, so often, when something comes at us with the label that this must be accepted because it is politically-correct, our spontaneous reaction is negative and we are tempted, out of emotional spite, to reject it simply because of the clock it’s wearing and the voices who are advocating for it. I’ve had my own share of experiences with this, in dealing with my emotions in the face of political-correctness. Teaching in some pretty sensitive classrooms through the years, where sometimes every word is a potential landmine that might blow up in your face, it’s easy to fall into an unhealthy sensitivity-fatigue. I remember once, frustrated with the hypersensitivity of some students (and the pompousness evident inside that sensitivity), I told a student to “lighten up”. He immediately accused me of being a racist on the basis of that remark.

It’s easy then to react with spite rather than empathy. But, like the bishop, whose story I cited earlier, we need to be principled and mature enough to not let emotion and temperament sway our perspective and our decisions. Just because a truth comes cloaked in political correctness and we hear it voiced in self-righteousness doesn’t necessarily mean it isn’t the truth. Sometimes we just have to swallow hard, eat our pride and irritation, and accept the truth of what is being presented. Political correctness is normally irritating, exaggerated, unbalanced, pompous, and lacking in nuance, but it serves an important purpose. We need this mirror: How we spontaneously speak about others flushes out a lot of our blind-spots.

Among other things, political correctness, as a check on our language, helps keep civil discourse civil, something in short supply today. Talk-radio, cable-television, blogs, tweets, and editorials are today more and more being characterized by a language that’s rude, insensitive, and flat-out disrespectful and, in its very disdain for political correctness, is, ironically, the strongest argument for political correctness. Politics, church, and community at every level today need to be much more careful about language, careful about being politically-correct, because the violence in our culture very much mirrors the violence in our language.

Moreover, attentiveness to language helps, long-term, to shape our interior attitudes and widen our empathy. Words work strongly to shape attitudes and if we allow our words to chip away at elementary courtesy and respect and allow them to offend others we help spawn a culture of disrespect.

Political correctness comes to us from both the left and the right. Both liberals and conservatives help dictate it and both can be equally self-righteous and bullying. But we must always be conscious that just because something is politically-correct doesn’t mean that it also might not be correct. Sometimes we just need to swallow hard and accept the truth.

Mass Intentions

Monday, August 24  St. Bartholomew, Apostle
7:45am Charles Sugrue; Our Beloved Dead

Tuesday, August 25  St. Louis; St. Joseph Calasanz, Priest
7:45am Emilia Donlon; David Woodward

Wednesday, August 26  Weekday
7:45am Edward Slowik; Patsy Huseman

Thursday, August 27  St. Monica
7:45am Thomas Durkin; Thomas Walsh

Friday, August 28  St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor
7:45am Jim Davin; Francesco Brotto

Saturday, August 29  Passion of St. John the Baptist
8:00am Joseph Norris; Emily Holada
5:00pm John DenBesten; Gloria Turlek

Sunday, August 30  22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time
7:30am Suzanne Eley; Joseph Rattner
9:00am Raymond Cochran; Bette Conrad
10:45am Emilia Donlon; Charles Tracy
No 12:15 Mass—Summer Schedule
5:00pm Thomas Durkin; Francesco Brotto

*Italics: Living Intention*

**The Week Ahead…**
Monday, August 24, 2015
9:30am Spiritual Journaling
10:30am Step 11 Christian Meditation
2:30pm Adoration
7:00pm Parish School Meet the Teacher Night

Tuesday, August 25, 2015
First Day of Parish School

Wednesday, August 26, 2015
2:30pm Christian Meditation
7:30pm Crossroads Ignite Scripture Study
7:00pm Crossroads Coordinator’s Meeting
7:00pm Prayer Group
7:00pm Group Voice Lessons

Thursday, August 27, 2015
6:00pm Family Festival Fest Appreciation Dinner
6:30pm YC 7th Grade Catechist Meeting

Friday, August 28, 2015

Saturday, August 29, 2015
7:00am Christian Meditation

Sunday, August 30, 2015
10:30am Crossroads Fresh/Soph Retreat Meeting
12:00pm Crossroads Day of Spirit Meeting

**Pray for Our Sick**
Marie Daly  George Forster  Gene Gallagher  Leona Hubatch  Don King  Helen Klimek
Juan Mendez  Marion Pascale  Jim Perona  Marie Sadowski  Dale Snow

**Pray for our Beloved Dead**
Jim McDonnell, brother of Fr. Joe McDonnell
Thomas Prendergast, husband of Mariann, father of Thomas, Jr.
Mark Shafranski, son of Aldona

St. John of the Cross Parish wants to stay connected with YOU!

St. John of the Cross Parish would like to connect with parishioners who are residing in area senior living centers or assisted care facilities. Please let us know if you or your family member is at a local facility, so that we might visit, call or bring Eucharist on a regular basis. Contact Steve Weigand, our new Pastoral Associate, to let us know how we might connect with you or your family member. Steve’s extension in the Parish Center is x137 or his email is sweigand@stjohnofthecross.org.

Parishioners who reside in another city for a portion of the year are encouraged to contact the Parish Center front office to arrange for our parish bulletin to be mailed or emailed to you.

**Contact our staff:**
Rev. David P. Dowdle, Pastor
ddowdle@stjohnofthecross.org
Rev. Joseph F. McDonnell, Pastor Emeritus
Rev. William J. Vollmer, Associate Pastor
bvollmer@stjohnofthecross.org
Deacon John Schopp, Deacon
john.schopp@newhemispheres.com
Bill Bright, Director of Outreach
bbright@stjohnofthecross.org
Janet Caschetta, Director of Youth Catechesis
jcascetta@stjohnofthecross.org
Kathleen Gorman, School Principal
gorman@sjc.pvt.k12.il.us
Katie Hayes, Dir of Crossroads Teen Ministry
khayes@stjohnofthecross.org
Jessica Koch, Director of Music
jkoch@stjohnofthecross.org
MJ Martin, Director of Operations
mjmartin@stjohnofthecross.org
Megan O’Malley, Parish Reservations
momalley@stjohnofthecross.org
Elizabeth Russell-Jones, Welcome
erussell-jones@stjohnofthecross.org
Steven Weigand, Pastoral Associate
sweigand@stjohnofthecross.org

**Marriage Banns**

Erin Morrisroe and David Federico
Young adults, parents, empty nesters & everyone
please come share your gifts

What is a catechist?
A person who faithfully believes in Jesus and is a witness to His message....
A person who enjoys the company of children and youth....
A practicing Catholic willing to spend a couple of hours a week sharing faith they received...
A person who wants to learn more about the Bible and Christ's teaching......
A parent, grandparent, single person, college student or high school student...

Answer God's baptismal call today! You will enrich your life and the life of the children you teach. You will be successful! We will provide detailed, step-by-step lesson plans and all of the materials you need, ready-to-go. Class includes music, games, DVDs, crafts, special presentations, etc. You attend an orientation to familiarize yourself with YC. We want you to be comfortable. Class times: Sunday mornings 10:15-11:30 AM or Monday evenings 6:15-7:30 PM.

Teachers (Catechists) Greatly Needed to minster to our youth!

Complete and Return to YC Office:
I am interested in sharing my love of Jesus with our children.
Please contact me with more information.

Name_________________________________________________________
Phone_________________________ Email_________________________
I can help on Sunday Mornings or Monday evenings or Wherever Needed
I would like more information about Teaching a class Helping as an Aide Being a Substitute

Someone who LOVES Jesus!