July 23, 2017

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Dear Parishioners,

The secular media has recently picked up on the Vatican’s re-issuing of the guidelines for communion bread, particularly as it affects gluten free hosts. First approved in 2004, there is nothing new in the recent re-issuing of the guidelines, and we have been in compliance with Vatican teaching since ‘gluten-free’ hosts have become available. Evidently the Vatican is responding to the phenomenon that people can buy ‘gluten free’ hosts in grocery stores and on-line, certainly something I was not aware of. When you think of administering the universal Church I suppose after a while you are not surprised by anything. We are also frequently limited by our own cultural understanding of issues because we are not aware of what is happening in different parts of the world.

Those of primarily European descent assume that everyone eats bread because they eat bread. There are many varieties of bread from different parts of the world, but everybody eats bread, right? Well, no. Think of Asia, a huge part of the world and numerically its largest part, but it is not primarily Christian much less Catholic and so does not have tremendous influence over decisions that are based in an Eurocentric bias, as in Rome. Asians primarily eat rice because they do not have the same growing conditions for wheat. They cultivate rice and it is a staple in Africa, India and China, to name a few places. The logical thing for the peoples of those regions is to use what is culturally appropriate and available-rice. Some in those countries want to use rice cakes for communion. It is certainly more readily available and less expensive than importing wheat to make the bread they use for communion, or to buy the wafers that contain wheat that are already made. So that’s the larger context that this issue comes up in:  how much variation is allowed in a universal Church. Well, there is some, but not much when it comes to defining what comprises the elements that are used in making the hosts to be consecrated. (There are guidelines for the wine that is used in becoming the blood of Christ as well.)

The hosts that the Vatican allows to be used as gluten free actually contain .001% gluten, which most would agree is for all intents and purposes, gluten free. Most with celiac disease can tolerate that amount easily. No one has ever noticed or complained about that amount of gluten. It is an infinitesimal amount, but it allows for the requirement of hosts being made from wheat. It may seem like splitting hairs, but think again of the complexity of the world. The Eucharist is the primary sacrament that has kept the church alive throughout the centuries so any change having to do with how it is made has important repercussions. Think of Italy alone and of all the variations there are in pasta, which are more than just its shape. Should the Church allow pasta to be consecrated? See where this takes you?

So for those who must have gluten free hosts please don’t panic. Nothing will change from what you have already been receiving as the body of Christ.

On another note, this week we say good-bye to a long time member of our community. Sr. Josephine O’Brien, IBVM, has chosen to move to be with other religious sisters to Casa San Carlo in Northlake. Sr. Josephine began her ministry as a teacher in our school in the 1960’s, having come from Ireland to Arizona in the 1950’s. She describes getting off the plane in Arizona wearing the full, heavy habit in the heat of the desert in August like it took place last week. Her moving date unexpectedly changed and we held a last minute ice cream social for her Saturday night. She did not want a big party. She has been involved in ministry to the dying through hospice, adult formation in spirituality, weekly lectionary studies, as a member of a journaling group, as a worker at the Garage Sale, and a faithful daily Mass goer for years. She’s been a fixture at the Saturday 5pm for years as well (so she could stay in bed in her pajama’s and read the Sunday New York times undisturbed-not really). She will be dearly missed, but I hope is able to visit frequently. We thank you, Sr. Josephine, and pray that God’s choicest blessings are yours for many years.

Until the Breaking of the Bread,
Fr. David
Popsicles In the Park

Play-date for Preschoolers and their Parents

Friday, August 4
10:00-11:30 am
Spring Rock Park Playground
Central and Burlington Avenue
Western Springs

Summer is the perfect time to play at the park and meet new friends. St. John of the Cross Parish invites parents with preschool-age children to enjoy a summer treat, meet one another and let us know how the parish can support you and your family.

Let us know if you can join in the fun. Send an e-mail with your names and your favorite Popsicle flavor to napolacek@gmail.com
Reflecting on Baptism as a Family

In order for God’s Word to take root in us and produce abundant fruit, we must endeavor to be like good soil (read last week’s Gospel from Matthew 13:1-13). Families, in particular, hold the responsibility for “preparing the soil” so that the seeds of God’s Word can grow strong. There are many ways in which families do this—family traditions in which faith is celebrated, prayer and reading of Scripture, and instruction on the faith. In these ways, parents fulfill the promises they made at their child’s Baptism.

Gather together as a family and reflect together on the Sacrament of Baptism. Tell the story of the Baptism of each child, showing any pictures that were taken. If you have your child’s Baptism candle or gown, share these as well. Recall together that one of the promises that parents make at their child’s Baptism is to bring them up in the practice of our faith. Talk together about the importance of this promise to your family. Reflect together on the ways in which your family practices your faith (daily prayer, Mass attendance, religious instruction, etc.). Remind one another that we do these things as a family so that God’s Word can take root in our lives and produce abundant fruit. Loyola Press

Baptism is a Communal Celebration

The St. John of the Cross Parish community is proud to print photos in our bulletin of the families bringing their babies for baptism as a way to celebrate the sacrament as a parish community. Through the parishioners who serve on our Baptism Team and by sharing the beautiful pictures in the bulletin, our parish community becomes an integral part of the baptismal celebrations, celebrating in each family’s joy and also promising to pray for and support the parents of these infants for years to come as they raise them in the faith. If you would like to learn more about serving on the Baptism Team, please call or email MJ in the Parish Center office. We are looking for individuals who can be paired with other members of the team or couples. Training is provided and scheduling is based on your availability.
Living the Gospel

“The kingdom of heaven is like . . . ” Whatever parable Jesus uses to teach about the kingdom of heaven, always at issue is growth, abundance, increase. While “the enemy” may try to thwart the kingdom, in the end God will prevail and “the righteous will shine like the sun.” So, “the kingdom of heaven is like” those of us who hear and live the Good News Jesus teaches. We ourselves are “the kingdom of heaven” when we live according to God’s ways, accepting the gracious will of God as the rule of our lives. We ourselves become the spaciousness of God’s kingdom, making visible the divine Presence and will to all those we touch with our own presence.

The impulse of the first parable is to pull the weeds. The impulse during our whole Christian living is to be impatient with ourselves as we grow in our discipleship, meeting challenges and temptations along the way. Part of Gospel living is to be patient with ourselves, especially when we have failed. The mercy, forgiveness, leniency, justice, and patience of God encourage repentance. Even our mistakes are ways that we have “ears . . . to hear” and learn better the ways of God. God’s final judgment comes at the “end of the age” when, hopefully, all of us have lived the ways of patience and faithfulness and have borne fruit. As we grow into being God’s kingdom, as we learn better to live our birthright, as we grasp more fully what God’s will is for us in our daily Gospel living and respond faithfully, we become more like the firstborn Son, more like worthy citizens of the “kingdom of heaven.”

May we live according to God’s ways and so make visible the “kingdom of heaven.”

May we be wheat that nourishes, shelter that protects, and leaven that raises others to new hope.

Background on the Gospel

In today’s Gospel, Jesus offers three parables to describe the Kingdom of Heaven. He also explains why he speaks to the crowds in parables and interprets the parable of the sower for the disciples. This reading is a continuation of Jesus’ discourse that we began reading last Sunday.

All three parables use commonplace experiences to describe aspects of the Kingdom of Heaven. The first parable is longer and more detailed than the next two, and it alerts us to the two-fold reality of the Kingdom of Heaven. The beginnings of the Kingdom of Heaven can be found in this world. The fruition of the Kingdom of Heaven, however, will not be realized until the final judgment. In the meantime, as Jesus’ explanation to the disciples cautions, any effort to judge the progress of the Kingdom of Heaven is premature. Only God, in the final judgment, will distinguish the fruit of the Kingdom of Heaven and offer its reward.

The second and third parables call to our attention the abundance that will result from the small beginnings of the Kingdom of Heaven. Just as a mustard seed—the smallest of all seeds—will become a large bush, so too God will bring his Kingdom to full bloom. As a small amount of yeast will leaven the entire batch of bread, so too God will bring about the expansion of his Kingdom. In each case the image is of the superabundance that God brings out of even the smallest of signs of the Kingdom.

Contained within these parables are words of caution as well as words of consolation. In the parable of the sower we are warned against judging others. To judge and uproot the “weeds” prematurely will harm the wheat; final judgment rests with God. In the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast, we are consoled by the message that God can work wonders and produce abundance from even the smallest beginnings of the Kingdom of Heaven.
The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened. (Matthew 13:33)

Christians are meant to be a leaven for our society. We are called to rise in all directions with the healing presence of our lives. Part of the noble task of our vocation is to help people discover the hint of eternity that flows through the inner rivers of their beings. This hint of eternity will nurture their hope. Hope is contagious. Hope is like yeast and baking powder. It has the energy that makes things rise. If you want to know if you are good for others, ask yourself how much hope you’ve given them. It is there you will find your answer.  

(Prayer for Parish Groups)

Let nothing disturb you or take away your peace,  
make your home in God.  
Let nothing alarm you or hold your heart in fear.  
Know that all things fade away.  

For God is unchanging, God is ever true; God who loves you so.  

So be patient with what is and everything is yours,  
all you need your God will give.  
For with God in your heart and your faith strong in him  
know that you will forever live.  

For God is unchanging, God is ever true; God who loves you so.  

Let nothing disturb you or take away your peace.  
Make your home,  
    make your home,  
    make your home in God.  

Teresa of Avila
Rebuilding on a Contemplative Foundation
Silently Gazing upon God

In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI invited Rowan Williams, then Archbishop of Canterbury and leader of the Anglican Church in England, to address the Synod of Bishops on the topic of evangelization. Williams is a brilliant theologian and man of prayer. His address to the synod shares the foundational importance of contemplation in rebuilding Christianity. Let his words speak to you:

To be fully human is to be recreated in the image of Christ’s humanity; and that humanity is the perfect human “translation” of the relationship of the eternal Son to the eternal Father, a relationship of loving and adoring self-giving, a pouring out of life towards the Other. Thus the humanity we are growing into in the spirit, the humanity that we seek to share with the world as the fruit of Christ’s redeeming work, is a contemplative humanity. . . . We could say that we begin to understand contemplation when we see God as the first contemplative, the eternal paradigm of that selfless attention to the Other that brings not death but life to the self. All contemplating of God presupposes God’s own absorbed and joyful knowing of . . . and gazing upon [God’s self] in the Trinitarian life.

To be contemplative as Christ is contemplative is to be open to all the fullness that the Father wishes to pour into our hearts. With our minds made still and ready to receive, we are at last at the point where we may begin to grow. And the face we need to show to our world is the face of a humanity in endless growth towards love, a humanity so delighted and engaged by the glory of what we look towards that we are prepared to embark on a journey without end to find our way more deeply into it, into the heart of the Trinitarian life. St. Paul speaks (in 2 Corinthians 3:18) of how “with our unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord,” we are transfigured with a greater and greater radiance. That is the face we seek to show to our fellow human beings.

And we seek this not because we are in search of some private “religious experience” that will make us feel secure or holy. We seek it because in this self-forgetting gazing towards the light of God in Christ we learn how to look at one another and at the whole of God’s creation. In the early Church, there was a clear understanding that we needed to advance from the self-understanding or self-contemplation that taught us to discipline our greedy instincts and cravings to the “natural contemplation” that perceived and venerated the wisdom of God in the order of the world and allowed us to see created reality for what it truly was in the sight of God—rather than what it was in terms of how we might use it or dominate it. And from there grace would lead us forward into true “theology,” the silent gazing upon God that is the goal of all our discipleship.

I do not need to speak when Rowan Williams has spoken so well.

Gateway to Silence:
Build on the positive; build on love.
We’ve talked about walking prayer in last week’s bulletin. We can take walking prayer further and make a pilgrimage. Actually, summer could be an ideal time for pilgrimage if you tend to take vacation during summer months. Many of us use vacation time to journey to hometowns and visit family. A hometown can be the location for profound pilgrimage.

For instance, your parents or aunt may still live in the town where you spent your childhood years. Childhood holds all kinds of memories, some we celebrate and some that require healing. While you’re visiting that town for a few days, why not take an hour or two to visit places there that were meaningful to you? You might visit a church or school, or a playing field where you spent a lot of time. Or a mall or movie theater where you and your friends lived out your own dramas. Your pilgrimage might consist of locations where major events happened to you—where you graduated from high school, survived a bad car wreck, met the person who became your first love, or buried the grandpa who always made you feel important.

Can you go to each significant location and offer a simple prayer there? Some people take objects to leave along the pilgrimage, such as flowers or small stones. You can make such a journey alone, or maybe you’d like to bring along a friend, sibling, or spouse to share these moments.

If you’re a road trip kind of person, why not create a trip that celebrates your life history? Maybe you visit a town you used to live in but also you visit the college you attended, the first company you worked for, the campground you frequented during high school, and the national forest that woke you up to nature’s beauty.

- What kind of pilgrimage appeals to you?
- Can you create some sort of pilgrimage as part of your summer prayer? Ignatian Spirituality

**Dear God, Let us revel in summer. Let us soak up the long days and warm sun. May our feet walk on sandy beaches and our heads rest on thick grass under blue skies. May we listen to and marvel at the singing of the birds and stop to watch blissful children at play.**

**This summer, God, may our breathing slow and our hearts open. God help us to be present to all that is so that we might best see all that might be.**

- Written and offered by David Johnson, Xavier Univ
Jesus says: “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). The Lord does not reserve this phrase for some of His friends, no, He addresses to “all” those that are tired and oppressed by life. And who can feel excluded from this invitation? The Lord knows what a burden life can be. He knows that many things weary the heart: past disappointments and wounds, burdens to carry and wrongs to be endured in the present, uncertainties and worries for the future.

In face of all this, Jesus’ first word is an invitation, an invitation to move and react: “Come.” The mistake, when things go badly, is to stay where one is, lying there. It seems evident, but how difficult it is to react and open oneself! It’s not easy. In dark moments it is natural to stay with oneself, to brood over how unjust life is, over how ungrateful others are and how evil the world is, and so on. We all know it. We have suffered this awful experience sometimes. But thus, closed in on ourselves, we see everything black. Then we even becomes familiar with sadness, which becomes as home: that sadness that prostrates us; this sadness is an awful thing. Instead, Jesus wants to extricate us from this “quicksand” and therefore He says to each one: “Come!” – “Who?” – You, you, you . . .

The way out is in relation, in extending the hand and raising one’s eyes towards the One who really loves us.

In fact, to come out of oneself isn’t enough, it is necessary to know where to go, because so many aims are illusory: they promise rest and distract somewhat, assuring peace and giving amusement, then leaving one in the solitude of before; they are “fireworks.” Therefore Jesus points out where to go: “Come to Me.” Often, in face of a burden of life or a situation that pains us, we try to talk about it with someone who listen to us, with a friend, with an expert . . . It is a great good to do this, but let us not forget Jesus! Let us not forget to open ourselves to Him and to tell Him about our life, to entrust people and situations to Him. Perhaps there are “areas” of our life that we have never opened to Him and that have remained dark, because they have never seen the Lord’s light. Each one of us has his/her own story. And if someone has this dark area, seek Jesus, go to a missionary of mercy, go to a priest, go . . . But go to Jesus, and tell this to Jesus. Today He says to each one of us: “Courage, do not give in to the burdens of life, do not close yourself in face of fears and sins, but come to Me!”

He waits for us, He always waits for us, not to resolve our problems magically, but to make us strong in our problems. Jesus does not remove the burdens of life, but the anguish of heart; He does not take the cross away from us, but carries it with us. And with Him, every burden becomes light (Cf. v. 30), because He is the rest that we seek. When Jesus enters our life, peace comes, that peace that remains even in trials, in sufferings. Let us go to Jesus, let us give Him our time, let us meet Him every day in prayer, in a confident and personal dialogue; let us familiarize ourselves with His Word, let us rediscover His forgiveness without fear, let us be satiated with His Bread of life: we will feel loved and consoled by Him.

It is He Himself who asks this of us, almost insisting. He repeats it again at the end of today’s Gospel: “Learn from Me [ . . . ] and you will find rest for your souls” (v.29). And thus we learn to go to Jesus and, while in the summer months we will seek a bit of rest from what wearies the body, let us not forget to find true rest in the Lord. May the Virgin Mary our Mother, who always takes care of us when we are tired and oppressed, help us in this and take us to Jesus.

Pope Francis Homily on 7.9.2017
The easy days of summer give families more time together. Use this page as a discussion starter at dinner during the week.

Gospel Matthew 13:24-43
Gospel Summary
This Gospel is a way of explaining why there is good and evil in the world today. As Jesus explained in the parable, the weeds (or evil) are allowed to grow with the wheat (or good). Only at the harvest (the end time) would God separate the good from the evil just as the farmer will separate the wheat from the weeds in Jesus' parable.

Reflection for Families
How do we answer our children when they ask why bad things happen to good people? This parable of the wheat and the weeds may be a way of explaining why God allows evil, like the weeds, to grow next to goodness in our world today. Evil will not really be gone until the fullness of God's Kingdom.

Bringing the Gospel Into Your Family
Try as a family to think about why God allows weeds to grow among the wheat in today's Gospel story. Either by looking through the newspaper, or sharing news about people in your own community, family or neighborhood, think about where weeds are growing. Consider ways that as a family you can help control the spreading of these weeds. What actions will you take?

Discussion Starters
1. Even though there are weeds in my life, I try to plant good seeds of wheat by . . .
2. One kind of weed this Gospel helps me understand better is . . . because . . .
3. One time that I saw something very small yield something very large was when . . .

God of the earth, you make the land fruitful.
You send the sun and rain to nourish the fruit of the earth.
You sent your Son to nourish us.
May the presence of Christ within us yield a harvest of justice and mercy.
We pray through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.
Amen.
Who Are Refugees?
Refugees are individuals who have fled their countries of origin and who meet the United Nations' criteria of having a "well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."

Each year the President of the United States authorizes the admission of a certain number of refugees into the country. This determination is based on a consultative process between Congress, the President and various federal agencies. In recent years, the US has accepted between 50,000 to 75,000 refugees per year. Before admission to the US, each refugee undergoes an extensive interviewing, screening and security clearance process. Refugees, having suffered great loss, including loss of their homes, livelihoods, possessions and oftentimes families, need assistance starting over in a new country.

Hope for Refugees in Chicago
The Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program has helped refugees from around the world who arrive in Chicago for the last 40 years. Each year more than 200 individuals are guided through the process of adjusting to life in the US. Led by Director, Elmida Kulovic, who came to America as a refugee from Bosnia 20 years ago, the program offers assistance in obtaining housing, food, clothing, household items, public benefits, health screenings, emergency health and mental health assistance, and provides a basic life skills orientation that helps refugees learn about everything from the English language to using public transportation to enrolling children in school and finding a job.

The Refugee Resettlement Program relies on many volunteers and resources in the community and from parishes in the archdiocese to accomplish the tremendous task of giving refugees new hope and opportunity in the US. SJC parishioners and friends of SJC have been involved in supporting families through the Refugee Resettlement Program for the last 3 years. During that time we have donated funds to purchase over 60 sets of mattresses and have been able to provide kitchen supplies, clothing, gift cards at Christmas, diapers, scores of brand-new stuffed animals for children arriving at O'Hare Airport, some furniture and more.

Trip to the Zoo
On August 3 SJC will be sponsoring a field trip to Brookfield Zoo for 30 children ages 5-12 years from Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Burma, and the Republic of Congo who are part of the Chicago Refugee Resettlement Program. The trip is being overseen by Bill Bright and Bill McLaughlin, SJC Parish Rep to the Resettlement Program. The refugee children will also be accompanied by several teens and adults from our parish.
Thank you to the 75+ Sponsors, 300+ Volunteers and the amazing Fest Planning Committee whose generous donations, time, and talent helped make this year’s Family Festival another incredible success! Here are some pictures from the 10:45am Mass under the big tent!

No one has come forward yet to claim the Split the Pot prizes drawn at SJC Fest 2017. Here are the winning numbers and the pot sizes:

- June 22 0173696 $275
- June 23 0924929 $525
- June 24 0798640 $1006
- June 25 0661158 $502

Please contact the Parish Center Office (708-246-4404) if you are a winner. You must be able to produce the winning ticket to claim the prize.
Monday, July 24
Basketball Camp
9:30am Spiritual Journeying
10:30am Step 11 Christian Meditation
2:30pm Adoration
7:00pm Seasons of Hope Grief Support

Tuesday, July 25
Basketball Camp
7:00pm Ignite Faith Sharing
7:30pm Christian Meditation

Wednesday, July 26
Basketball Camp
2:30pm Christian Meditation
7:00pm Group Voice Lessons
7:00pm SAM Planning Meeting

Thursday, July 27
Basketball Camp
2:00pm Adult Summer Book Study
7:00pm Divorce and Beyond Support Group
7:00pm Group Voice Lessons

Friday, July 28
Basketball Camp

Saturday, July 29, 2017
7:00am Christian Meditation

Sunday, July 30

From the Desk of Katie Hayes

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? This has been my daughter Hailey’s favorite story lately, so the question on my mind a lot is WHAT DO YOU SEE?

In the photo below I see three smiling faces. Joining me for our monthly coffee date is Elizabeth Tomacek, the Coordinator of Youth Ministry at St. Cletus and Olivia Hollman, the new Coordinator of Youth Ministry at St. Francis Xavier. Welcoming Olivia to our area is exciting! Katie Nicholson, SJC Crossroads Coordinator, (who btw already celebrated her first year anniversary of ministry at SJC this month) was also able to meet Olivia and talk about our ministry and collaboration...in fact, they were so engrossed in conversation they did not get a photo! We look forward to getting to know Olivia, sharing our ministry and discovering her many gifts. Partnering in our ministry to teens with St. Cletus and St. Francis strengthens our ability to succeed in our mission. Read our Crossroads mission below.

If you ever wondered why Elizabeth, Olivia or I tend to smile so much, I am sure it is truly because of our involvement and commitment in ministry to our teens. Consider joining our team and serving alongside the teens and adults in our parish! Contact us at khayes@stjohnofthecross.org or knicholson@stjohnofthecross.org

Look for Crossroads registration to open this week!!!

Katie Hayes
Director of Crossroads Teen Ministry

“If we are to succeed, we must offer young people a spiritually challenging and world-shaping vision that meets their hunger for the chance to participate in a worthy adventure.” Renewing the Vision, Bishops’ Document on Youth Ministry

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 our Catholic faith
- Develop leadership abilities by serving others
- Have fun in a faith-filled environment.

We will carry out this mission by fostering the growth of our “Crossroads Family,” an intergenerational community of believers who strive to support our teens and help them to connect to their faith as they navigate the high school years. This family includes the teens, their families, our volunteers, and the parish community.
The mark of genuine contrition is not a sense of guilt, but a sense of sorrow, of regret for having taken a wrong turn; just as the mark of living in grace is not a sense of our own worth but a sense of being accepted and loved despite our unworthiness. We are spiritually healthy when our lives are marked by honest confession and honest praise.

Jean-Luc Marion highlights this in a commentary on St. Augustine’s famous Confessions. He sees Augustine’s confession as a work of a true moral conscience because it is both a confession of praise and a confession of sin. Gil Bailie suggests that this comment underlines an important criterion by which to judge whether or not we are living in grace: “If the confession of praise is not accompanied by the confession of sin it an empty and pompous gesture. If the confession of sins is not accompanied by a confession of praise, it is equally vacuous and barren, the stuff of trashy magazines and tabloid newspapers, a self-preening parody of repentance.”

Gil is right, but doing both confessions at one and the same time is not an easy task. We generally find ourselves falling into either a confession of praise where there is no real confession of our own sin; or into the “self-preening parody of repentance” of a still self-absorbed convert, where our confession rings hollow because it shows itself more as a badge of sophistication than as genuine sorrow for having strayed.

In neither case is there a true sense of grace. Piet Fransen, whose masterful book on grace served as a textbook in seminaries and theology schools for a generation, submits that neither the self-confident believer (who still secretly envies the pleasures of the amoral that he’s missing out on) nor the wayward person who converts but still feels grateful for his fling, has yet understood grace. We understand grace only when we grasp existentially what’s inside the Father’s words to his older son in the parable of the prodigal son: My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.

The older brother would not be bitter if he understood that everything his father owns is already his, just as he would not be envious of the pleasures his wayward brother tasted if he understood that, in real life, his brother had been dead. But it takes a deeper grasp of what grace is to intuit that, namely, to grasp that life inside God’s house dwarfs all other pleasures. The same is true for the convert who has given up his wayward life but still secretly rejoices in the experience and sophistication it brought him and nurses a condescending pity for the less-experienced. He too has not yet really understood grace.

In his book, The Idea of the Holy, now considered a classic, Rudolf Otto submits that in the presence of the holy we will always have a double reaction: fear and attraction. Like Peter at the Transfiguration, we will want to build a tent and stay there forever; but, like him too before the miraculous catch of fish, we will also want to say: “Depart from me for I am a sinful man.” In the presence of the holy, we want to burst forth in praise even as we want to confess our sins.

That insight can help us to understand grace. Piet Fransen begins his signature book on grace, The New Life of Grace, by asking us to imagine this scene: Picture a man who lives his life in mindless hedonism. He simply drinks in the sensual pleasures of this world without a thought for God, responsibility, or morality. Then, after a long life of illicit pleasure, he has a genuine deathbed conversion, sincerely confesses his sins, receives the sacraments of the church, and dies in that happy state. If our spontaneous reaction to this story is: “Well, the lucky fellow! He had fling and still made it in the end!” we have not yet understood grace but instead are still embittered moralizers standing like the older brother in need of a further conversation with our God.

And the same holds true too for the convert who still feels that what he’s experienced in his waywardness, his fling, is a deeper joy than the one known by those who have not strayed. In this case, he’s come back to his father’s house not because he senses a deeper joy there but because he deems his return an unwanted duty, less exciting, less interesting, and less joy-filled than a sinful life, but a necessary moral exit strategy. He too has yet to understand grace.

Only when we understand what the father of the prodigal son means when he says to the older brother: Everything I have is yours”, will we offer both a confession of praise and a confession of sin.
Mass & Reconciliation Schedule & Intentions

Monday, July 24  St. Sharbel Makhluf
7:45am Mike Reidy; Walter Cebula

Tuesday, July 25  St. James
7:45am Karen Halverson; Our Beloved Dead

Wednesday, July 26  Sts. Joachim and Anne
7:45am Michelle Sprinkle; Jerry Callahan

Thursday, July 27  Weekday
7:45am Miles Maley; Maxine Pusinelli

Friday, July 28  Weekday
7:45am Dolores Williams; Laura Szejka-Zimme

Saturday, July 29  St. Martha
8:00am  John & Rose Novosad; Kevin Joseph Morrissey
~ Reconciliation Follows Mass ~
5:00pm  Alice & Al Sobey; Robert Plechaty

Sunday, July 30  17th Sunday in Ordinary Time
7:30am Marie Burdi; Jerry Callahan
9:00am Bert Prost; Patrick Walsh
10:45am Betty Napleton; Vale Raila
12:15pm Summer Mass Schedule—No 12:15 Mass
5:00pm Donald Chopp; Deceased members of Lipinski, Sampson & Mulvaney Families; Bubbles Sabath

Remember, o most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, we fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, our Mother. To you we come, before we stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not our petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer them. Amen.

Fr. Michal Forde Update
In case you were wondering, Fr. Michal is fine. He had a nail pierce one of the tires on his car and was unable to celebrate the 10:45 am Mass with us last Sunday. We continue to be grateful for his sacramental ministry at SJC.

Calling artists, set designers, interior designers.
The Art and Environment committee is looking for artists, and designers. This committee plans and prepares the worship site of our church for the various liturgical seasons. If you are interested in sharing your creative gifts, please contact Fr. Bill at the Parish Center office or by email.

Marriage Banns
Erin Marvin & Joseph Jarrett
Sr. Josephine O’Brien is moving to her new home at Casa San Carlo in Northlake next week. Sister is grateful to her friends who came to help her pack her library of books and looks forward welcoming visitors from SJC, and of course, coming home to visit us often. God bless you Sister. You have made an indelible mark on our hearts.