

**HIS WORD TODAY**  
by Rev. William J. Reilly

**Fourth Sunday of Easter**  
**May 3, 2020**

“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, ‘What are we to do, my brothers?’ Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

It is exciting to read the sermons of Peter and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles. They call our attention to the fundamental teaching of Jesus’ dying and rising for the love of us. When was the last time the words of a preacher, a spiritual book or magazine, or a conversation with a friend or teacher led you to ask ‘What am I to do?’

If I follow the teaching of Peter, I will become more aware of the gift of the promised Spirit to form and transform my life. We are told not to stifle the Spirit, yet sometimes we do a good job at it. We have been baptized, but can always do more in the area of repentance. What am I going to do?



# CHURCH OF ST. DENIS

MANASQUAN, NEW JERSEY

## STAFF

Reverend William J. P. Lago, Pastor  
Rev. Joseph Miele, Weekend Assistant  
Rev. Lewis Papera, Weekend Assistant  
Mr. George R. Kelder, Jr., Deacon  
Mr. Gary J. Pstrak, Deacon

Mrs. Eileen Ziesmer, Pastoral Associate  
Mr. Mark Mataranglo, Director of Music Ministry  
Sr. Mary Guyer, SSJ  
Mr. Denis Campbell, Trustee  
Mr. Gregory W. Boyle, Trustee

BEACH CHAPEL .....	554 East Main Street		
RECTORY .....	90 Union Avenue	732-223-0287	FAX ..... 732-528-1901
CONVENT .....	117 Virginia Avenue		732-292-0772
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE .....	119 Virginia Avenue		732-223-1161
ST. DENIS CONFERENCE OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY .....			732-223-1383
CHURCH E-MAIL ADDRESS .....		st.denis@verizon.net	
PASTOR'S E-MAIL ADDRESS .....		wlago@dioceseoftrenton.org	
WEB PAGE ADDRESS .....		http://www.churchofstdenis.org	



### MASS SCHEDULE:

Weekday Masses: 7:30 AM (Mon.-Tues.-Wed.-Fri.) – St. Denis Church  
Saturday: 8:30 AM – St. Denis Church  
Saturday Evening: 4:30 PM (fulfills Sunday obligation)- St. Denis Church  
Sunday: 8:00 AM, 9:30 AM & 11:00 AM- St. Denis Church  
Sunday: 10:00 AM - Our Lady Star of the Sea Chapel  
Holy Days: Evening before: 7:00 PM & day of: 7:30 AM & 7:00 PM-St. Denis Church

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:** Every Saturday from 3:30 until 4:15 PM - St. Denis Church. Also by appointment.

**MIRACULOUS MEDAL DEVOTIONS:** Tuesday morning after the 7:30 AM Mass-St. Denis Church

**BAPTISM:** The sacrament of Baptism is celebrated on the second and fourth Sundays of the month at 12:15 pm at St. Denis Church. Parents must complete the required preparation with the priest or deacon and obtain godparent eligibility letters before a date for Baptism will be given. Please call the rectory for further details.

**MARRIAGE:** Please contact the rectory office for more information about weddings. All couples contemplating marriage are asked to give the priests one year prior notice in order that all the requirements for marriage can be satisfied. Do not reserve the reception hall before contacting the church; your requested date may not be available.

**CARE OF THE SICK AND HOMEBOUND:** We will gladly bring Holy Communion to anyone who is ill or otherwise unable to get to Mass. Please call the rectory to make arrangements. The priests and deacon make regular visits to the local hospitals. Please call the rectory if any loved one is hospitalized.

**RITE OF CHRISTIAN BURIAL:** At such times of deep pain and loss, we seek to offer our bereaved families comfort and hope as they commend their loved ones to God. Please note that, in accordance with Church regulations, eulogies are not permitted during Funeral Masses.

**RECTORY OFFICE HOURS:** Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 12:00 PM and 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM. There are no office hours on Saturday & Sunday. Evenings are by appointment only.

**NEW PARISHIONERS:** Welcome! We encourage new families moving into the area to stop in or call the rectory to arrange for registration.

**CELIAC SPRUE PARISHIONERS** – Saint Denis provides a low gluten (<0.01% gluten content) host. Parishioners who are gluten-intolerant should see a deacon or priest prior to the start of Mass in order to be included in the reception of the Eucharist.

**VISIT US ON FACEBOOK-** Saint Denis Parish Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/churchofstdenis](http://www.facebook.com/churchofstdenis). You don't need to have a Facebook account to read parish news and updates, but would need one to leave comments and feedback.

THIS WEEK'S  
**MASS**  
INTENTIONS

**Saturday, May 2, 2020**

8:30 am Emil & Anna Taborelli by the Family  
8:30 am Mr. & Mrs. Strigliabotti by the Family  
8:30 am Virginia & Angelo Taborelli by the Family  
4:30 pm Leo Cunningham by the Family  
4:30 pm Marilyn Bialas by the Family  
4:30 pm Beatrice Bonner by the Family

**Sunday, May 3, 2020**

8:00 am Eleanor Stankunas by Deacon Gary  
8:00 am Emil & Anna Taborelli by the Family  
8:00 am Virginia & Angelo Taborelli by the Family  
9:30 am Stephen DePaul by Ronald & Debra Reba  
9:30 am Christopher Connelly by the O'Donnell Family  
9:30 am Harry Kegelman by Maureen & Jim Lampariello  
10:00 am For the People of the Parish  
11:00 am Consuelo Iraheta by Lucia & Joseph Nitti  
11:00 am Toby Santoro by Ralph & Carol Cabrera  
11:00 am Roy Beaudoin by Pat & Patrick Trezza

**Monday, May 4, 2020**

7:30 am Kayla Bruton (3rd Anniversary) by Mona & John Kirk  
7:30 am Cathy O. Hayser by John & Luann Quigley & Family  
7:30 am Virginia & Angelo Taborelli by the Family

**Tuesday, May 5, 2020**

7:30 am Frederick & Amelia Pauly by Ellie & John Fox  
7:30 am Mr. & Mrs. Strigliabotti by the Family  
7:30 am Emil & Anna Taborelli by the Family

**Wednesday, May 6, 2020**

7:30 am Joseph & Janice Racioppi by the Family  
7:30 am Virginia & Angelo Taborelli by the Family  
7:30 am Mr. & Mrs. Strigliabotti by the Family

**Thursday, May 7, 2020**

No Mass

**Friday, May 8, 2020**

7:30 am Helen Kotula Komski by Emilio & Marianne Pane  
7:30 am Emil & Anna Taborelli by the Family  
7:30 am Virginia & Angelo Taborelli by the Family

**Saturday, May 9, 2020**

8:30 am Gertrude Simmet by the Moynihan Family  
8:30 am John (Bud) Donohue by Peter & Mary Jennings & Family  
8:30 am Margaret McGrath by her Sister  
4:30 pm For the People of the Parish

**Sunday, May 10, 2020**

8:00 am Mother's Day Intentions  
9:30 am Mother's Day Intentions  
10:00 am Mother's Day Intentions  
11:00 am Mother's Day Intentions

**DIOCESAN RESPECT LIFE WEBSITE-** Please visit the Respect Life website of the Diocese of Trenton at [respectlifeto-day.org](http://respectlifeto-day.org). You will obtain important information concerning respect life issues in our diocese and our world.

**HOME DEVOTION-** Please visit [AscensionPress.com](http://AscensionPress.com) for special resources and events to help Catholics with home devotions throughout the coming weeks.

**MOVING?** Please inform the rectory office if you are moving out of the area or if you have a change of address, so the envelope company can be notified. Thank you!

**PLEASE PRAY FOR THE DECEASED** especially Francine Goodman, Kathy Kleinlein, and Joseph Peters. 

**PARISH COUNSELING SERVICES-** A joint effort of the Diocese of Trenton and Catholic Charities provides licensed professionals for short term counseling (up to 6 sessions) to parishioners dealing with difficult issues, for example, job-stress, family concerns and bereavement. Contact your pastor for additional information and referral. The fee is \$90 per session, but, if needed, financial assistance is available through the Diocese of Trenton Parish Counseling Services.



especially Mary Moran, Steve Ford, Elizabeth Ann Linden, Peggy Andrigh, Mary Damico, Eileen Byrne, Amanda Castro, Dolores Palmisano, Holly Boyd, Mary Conlon, Albert Wood, Maiya Andrews, Velma Andrews, Stella Thompson, Katie Holbrook, Claire Meachum, Mike Pierce, Thomas Hayes, Jr., Thomas Evans, Catherine O'Connor, Edith Bean, Phyllis Van Salders, Joanne Panzarella, Taryn Rotondi, Kathy Wicks, Michael McNulty, Mary Jane Schaaf, Lisa Pirrello, Joseph Bick, Mary Collins, Ken Kleinlein, Robert Kelleher, Stephen Byrne, Denise Frank, Lucy Falco, Marie Tashjian, Angeline Hart, Joan Tumbas, Cathleen Brenner, Nick Ljuljana, Patricia Blumenstock, Sue O'Connor, Baby Cayden Joseph, Thomas Fahey, Baby Kelly Grace, Nair Messias, Jennifer Noble, Scarlet Slotnick, Belle & Ashton, John Najar, Tina Pilot, Karen Brown, Elizabeth Morgan, Frank Lopez, Christina Roundtree, Eugene Karpinski, Charlotte Pentek, Phillip Graceffa, Christian Russo, Rose DeMarco, Dee Vulgaris, Michael McGonigle, Baby Evelyn Mizer, Herbert "Butch" Wolfe, Leanna Rawson, Nannette Forkan, Nicole Giambrone, Lisa Dunfee, Albert J. Cifelli, Brian Alberse, Stanley Bevan, Windell Rainey, Sadie Svenson, Barbara Magda, Paul Tuyp, Nancy Murphy, Bernadette Bevan, George Leonard, Teresa Hayes, Jeanne Hayes, Irene Hayes, Ronnie Micciulla, Cindy Tomkins, Joseph Fiamingo, Baby Colton Gardella, Anita McCudden, Catherine Kelleher, Baby Siena Grace Pizzillo, Samara Pirrong, Donna Schwear, Helen McGowan, Karen Williams, Timothy Michal Przywara, Christopher Kurtanick, Wes Pal, Neil O'Callaghan, Siobhan Vuono, Linda Lowery, Tanner Koch, Linda Custode, Marty Pirrong, Bridget Korn, Vincent Azzollini, Scott Burdett, Joan Lipscomb, Baby Lucy, Stephen Whyte, Victoria Margadonna, Christine Fields, Chris Faraca, Kathy Larkin, Gordon Justin, John Jonason, Estelle Jonason, Jim Kazenmayer, Frank Meidenbauer, Sean Campbell, Joel Rivera, Jimi Hood, Al Ricciardi, Eileen Beesley, Beverly Heinz, Pauline Naturile, Haley Keating, John Fossani, Paul Borden, Mary Daidone, Donna Morgan, Jonathan Miller, Dennis Datillo, Bill Koch, Jennifer Pindar, Doris Abruzzo, Sandy Heitner, Randy Farmer, Joseph Pastore, Christine Coburn, Julianna Grusso, Frank Dugan, Lori Hurd, John Gondek, Lois Borton, Roddy Pilot, William Liao, the Borgias, the Pilots, the Nesbitts and the Campbells.



**April 19, 2020**

Regular Collection-	\$2,420.00
2nd Collection (Parish Debt)-	\$4,375.00
Online Giving (3/31/20-4/26/20)-	\$17,487.00

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY !**

**DEBT REDUCTION COLLECTION-** Next weekend our second collection will be used to reduce the parish debt. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

**MOTHER'S DAY SPIRITUAL BOUQUETS-** May 10th is Mother's Day. Beginning on Mother's Day weekend and continuing for the next two days, we will have special Masses in honor of all our mothers, both living and deceased. To include a name or names in the Mass intentions, please mail your intentions with your donation to: St. Denis Rectory 90 Union Ave. Manasquan 08736. If you would like a special Mother's Day card for a living mother, please call the office during regular business hours, so a card/cards can be left on the rectory porch for you. Intentions can also be emailed to [st.denis@verizon.net](mailto:st.denis@verizon.net). All intentions should be received by the office staff no later than Friday, May 8th. They will then be placed on the altar and the intentions will be remembered at the Mother's Day Masses.

**CENTER A LA CARTE RESCHEDULED-** The Center in Asbury Park had to postpone its Center a la Carte fundraiser. The new date is October 2, 2020. Once again it will be held in Asbury's beautiful Convention Hall. The Center will still hold its 50/50 drawing on May 15, 2020. To date, \$8,000 has been raised, with a goal to surpass \$10,000. If you have not yet done so, please purchase a ticket for the May drawing by calling Patsy at 732-774-3416 x115. There will be a second drawing with new tickets at the event in October. Tickets for the October drawing will be available in early summer.



especially Navy Lt. Rachael M. Honrath, Navy MIDN Nora N. Honrath, Army Captain Christopher Cauda, Army Captain Matthew Cauda, Navy LL. Edward P. Windas, Marine Lance Corporal Laura Licata, Contractor Benjamin Ostrow, Air Force Captain David Smith, Army

Major Sean Fessenden, Army Lt. Nikkole Crosson, Navy Captain Colin S. Walsh, Army Captain Dr. Justin Eisenman, Army Lt. Brian Quinn, Navy E4 Patrick Moynihan, Army Major Michael Potoczniak, Air Force 1st Lt. Dominic Celiano, Air Force Academy Cadet 2nd Class Slade Kelling, Air Force Academy, Coast Guard Petty Officer Joseph Beattie, Navy CM Taylor Nesbitt, Airman Devon Webster, Army Private 1st Class Cody Svenson, Lt. Jg. Mary T. Herman, Matthew Van Pelt, Army, USMC 2nd Lt. Philip Cahill, USMC 2nd Lt. Joanna Smith-Cahill, Navy MIDN Michael Zimmerman U.S. Naval Academy, Air Force 2nd Lt. Jason Trischitta, Allison M. Ingraham at West Point Academy, Lt. Col. Ivan Ingraham USMC, PFC Joseph J. Foley, Jr. USMC, Airman Andrew Halmi, Robert Halmi, U.S. Army, Corporal Jordan Basile USMC, PFC Neil Horenburg USMC.



**WEEK OF MAY 3, 2020**

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
MICHAEL & MARY KOLON  
REQUESTED BY KAY KOLON**

**A Message from Father Bill**

As we enter the month of May we always turn to Mary and Joseph in a particular way. The feast of St. Joseph the Worker is always celebrated on May 1<sup>st</sup> and certainly the month of May is always known as the month of May Crownings and the rosary in honor of Our Blessed Mother.

As the world continues to face the ongoing effects of the global pandemic of the coronavirus, we marked the feast of St. Joseph the Worker in a particular way, in union with all the parishes in our diocese and led by our bishop, as we ask St. Joseph's intercession for all who are working on behalf of all those affected by the coronavirus (healthcare workers, first responders, support staff of all sorts, researchers, and so many others behind the scenes). We also pray for all who struggle to work and those who have lost their jobs. We ask St. Joseph to intercede for us all.

Also on May 1<sup>st</sup>, all of the bishops of the United States and Canada joined in renewing the consecrations of the two nations to the care of our Blessed Mother. Through a collective dedication or entrustment of a nation to Mary, an act of consecration is meant to be a reminder to the faithful of the Blessed Mother's witness to the Gospel and to ask for her effective intercession before her Son on behalf of those in need. Please pray the rosary this month, asking our Blessed Mother's intercession for all her children during the pandemic. (Historically, we must call to mind that Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore, the first bishop of the United States, placed the United States under Mary's protection in a pastoral letter of 1792. And the bishops attending the Sixth Provincial Council of Baltimore in 1846 determined to name the Blessed Virgin Mary, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, as the Patroness of the United States.)

May is the month of our Blessed Mother and the month when we honor all our mothers. We will continue our parish tradition of praying for all mothers at a triduum of Masses: Sunday, May 10 – Tuesday, May 12. Feel free to email the office [st.denis@verizon.net](mailto:st.denis@verizon.net) with the names of your mothers, grandmothers, godmothers, and other mothers in your life, both living and deceased, so that their names can be printed, bound together, and placed on our altar during our three days of Masses. If you would like a card to send to someone, please contact the office, so Betsy can assist you and make arrangements. Also, if you would like to send a donation for the Mass intentions you request, please send that to the parish, or drop it off in the mailbox. (With checks, please make them payable to St. Denis Church and put Mother's Day on the memo line.) Thank you for that detail.

I invite you to read the reflections of the clergy of St. Denis, for this Sunday's readings, as we continue to "let Jesus Easter in us."





**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**– Due to the conditions at the time of this bulletin, please check our parish website regularly for updates.

**PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:** First Communion will be rescheduled. Confirmation interviews will be rescheduled. At this time we do not know if Confirmation itself will be rescheduled. It is to be determined.

**CATHOLIC RADIO**- Tune into 89.3 FM to hear the Gospel message, live call-in shows, devotions, speakers, inspirational music and more. WFJS 89.3 FM Catholic Radio is an EWTN affiliate reaching Monmouth and parts of Ocean Counties. Listen on-line at [www.DomesticChurchMedia.org](http://www.DomesticChurchMedia.org). Free apps are on your iPhone and Blackberry. Call or write for your FREE Program Guide: WFJS PO Box 7509 Trenton 08628.

**TRANSLATOR NEEDED FOR FOOD PANTRY**- Speak Spanish? Have an hour or so on Tuesday afternoon or Saturday morning? Our St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry is looking for someone to assist in our interactions with Spanish speaking visitors. Social distancing is practiced and face masks are provided. If you think you might be interested or have questions, call our hotline and leave a message. 732-223-1383



**St. Vincent De Paul Society's Food Pantry**

**At St. Denis Church  
Manasquan, NJ 08736  
Phone: 732-223-1383**

Location: Msgr. O'Connor Hall  
(lower level of church)

Until further notice: There will be curbside pick-up of prepackaged food with appropriate social distancing.

Questions or special food needs?

Please call our hotline number at 732-223-1383

Please note adjusted pantry hours:

Tuesdays: 1PM – 3PM and  
3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays from 10AM – 12noon

At this time, donations may be dropped off curbside by the pantry during regular pantry hours or on the rectory front porch, under the overhang.

There has been an overwhelming response to our food pantry donation requests. The shelves are very well stocked. Thank you! The items listed below are the most needed items as these are items most requested by our needy neighbors. Please know they are being received with sincere gratitude!

**Items requested for food pantry donation:**

**Depleted:** box milk (like Parmalat), canned chili, canned beef stew, microwave popcorn, mayonnaise, vinegar, regular instant coffee, unscented hand/body lotion (like Dermal-sil), male deodorant, female deodorant, male 3-in-one body wash (like VO5), dish liquid, canned condensed milk (unsweetened)

Very Low: toilet paper, tissues, toothpaste and toothbrushes

**Please do not include perishables (eggs, meats, cheese) with your donations. We are not able to accept them, as we do not have proper storage space to accommodate these items.**

**Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.**

**ST. DAMIEN OF MOLOKAI- Patron of People Suffering from Leprosy/ HIV(May 10<sup>th</sup>)-** Hawaii was in the midst of a health crisis; primarily, influenza, syphilis and leprosy. The King of Hawaii, Kink Kamehameha IV created a leper colony on the island of Molokai. Fr. Damien requested to be sent to Molokai to tend to their spiritual needs. He arrived at Kalaupapa on May 10, 1873, where he cared for 600 lepers. That day, May 10<sup>th</sup>, would ultimately be picked as his feast day because it marks the particular act of supreme charity and selflessness that would ultimately lead to his canonization. Fr. Damien built the Parish Church of St. Philomena where he preached and taught the Catholic faith. He restored pride and dignity to the people in the settlement. He provided comfort to the people on the island for 16 years serving as priest, doctor and home builder. He built their coffins and dug their graves. He eased their grief and pain. He helped patients find comfort in the Bible and in one another. Fr. Damien eventually became a part of the community, contracting the disease after spending several years among the sick. He said he didn't want to be cured if it meant leaving the island. Damien died in Kalaupapa in 1889.

Following in St. Damien's footsteps might be exactly what we need in these days. Following in them doesn't mean giving up your life to dress leprosy wounds in an unknown land. Spreading his spirit is as easy as lending a hand to your neighbor or just listening to their stories. These next weeks may be filled with anxiety for many as we talk about "reopening" the state and returning to interacting with each other as we learn how to live in a world changed by COVID19. It's a time to be encouraged by St. Damien putting our focus on connecting people to their faith and helping folks with what they need instead of worrying about what will happen. Many have lost loved ones, jobs, and irreplaceable experiences. It's a time for us to pray for wisdom on how to break the isolation and grief as we start to step out from our homes. St. Damien, pray for us as we fight feelings of anxiety and helplessness and try, like you, to be a helper; to give from our own gratitude and faith.

**PRAYER**

*Bind up the wounds of your children, O God, and help us to be bold and loving in service to all who are shunned for the diseases they suffer, following the example of your servant, Damien, that your grace may be poured forth upon all; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

**THE SOCIETY OF  
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL**



The Gospels often ask us to have faith in God. They remind us that He will help us to know the right path to take. In choosing a path to help, He does not ask us about ability but only our *availability*; and, if we prove our dependability, He will *increase* our *capability* to do good. God often doesn't call the "most qualified" He qualifies the "called".

The volunteers of St. Vincent de Paul, who come from many diverse backgrounds, know only so well how true this is. If you have an interest in seeing how "qualified" you can become in helping those in need, come to one of the Society's meetings when they resume. The meetings are held on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at 6:30 pm in Msgr. O'Connor Hall (lower level of the church).

If you need assistance, please call the St. Vincent de Paul hotline at 732-223-1383.

## **Reflection by Fr. Bill**

On the Fourth Sunday of Easter we read from the Gospel of St. John (10:1-10) which has the great proclamation of our Lord, "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly." No matter what is happening, at any given moment, the Lord comes to us so that we might have "life more abundantly." We believe and live in the reality that God is the Author and Giver of our life and in addition to that gift of life, Jesus is inviting us to a more abundant life. "Life more abundantly" is nothing less than a relationship with God which, in its fullness, is a share in the divine life, and so a participation in divinity with God in the life of the Trinity. Life is abundant when we live through/with/in God. Our life takes on abundant meaning because God gives us this meaning, a meaning of life that transcends the natural life and, at the same time, imbues the natural life with supernatural meaning.

The powerful declaration of Jesus is also a promise. Jesus is making a promise, to those who believe in Him, that He will always be with them and give them the opportunity to make life more abundant. A more abundant life is entered into through our own practical life experiences. I would like to reflect on Jesus' declaration/promise of abundant life, using verses that Jesus speaks of earlier in the Gospel passage. In the first verses of the chapter, the Lord speaks of the Shepherd and the sheep. The sheep need to do two things: 1) enter through the gate and 2) hear/recognize the voice of the shepherd. Let us take each of these in turn.

Firstly, "enter through the gate." Our Lord says that the gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd. The gate 'opens' our regular life to life with the Shepherd. The gate is not on the horizon, it is right here and now. We are given the freedom to choose: stay on this side of the gate, with the secular world and its flat grass, or enter through the gate to live the rich multivalent life of grace, feasting on the Bread of Life and the Cup of Eternal Blessing, share an abundant life of meaning with Jesus, where even suffering and death is transformed into an offering of love through/with/in Jesus *for others* which has a redeeming effect that lasts forever.

The verse about the 'gate' reminds me of the verse in Revelation 3, 8: "[Behold, I have left an open door](#) before you, which no one can close." Jesus wants to give us life to the full, so He opens the gate and keeps it open and no one can shut it. Jesus opens a relationship up to us and does not close the door to that relationship. We, of our own free will, can back out of the gate, back out of our relationship, but not Jesus. Practically speaking, we must take to heart that "life more abundantly" can only come through a viable relationship with Jesus. Abundant life can never be on our own terms, only on God's terms. And God is always there, inviting and waiting. The gate is always open.

Even with sin, the door to the confessional is always open and Jesus makes sure it can never be shut. I get to live in that reality both as a confessor and as someone who confesses. Abundant life is never closed off to us, whether due to personal sin (sin of my own choice) nor whether due to social sin (sinful actions made against me by others) nor natural sin (a deadly virus or hurricane or other 'sins' caused by the fallen state of the world). Our call is to 'see' the 'open door' – believe in our life open to God, open to abundant life, to choose relationship with God, to choose hope (never despair) and reconciliation and to look for the 'open door' by recognizing the voice of the Shepherd calling us to follow. Reflect on the door open which no one can shut and memorize this verse from Scripture, so that it can come to you and inspire you when you need it. Even in the pandemic with such difficulties and sufferings, God wants to be with us; and 'God-with-us' allows our life to be abundant. What movement of our soul does it take to "move through the gate?" Acts of Faith, Hope and Love are needed and we pray for the grace to make these acts.

Secondly, after our hearts and minds are steeped in the ever-present promise of an open gate and a more abundant life, we need to keep attentive to the voice of the Shepherd and follow. How have you "heard the voice of the Shepherd" recently? I realize that on first glance, the phrase "more abundant life during the pandemic" can seem foolish. But I am asking about life with God in the face of the pandemic. So I ask you to reflect on two questions in order to understand what I mean. These following questions will allow us to "hear" the voice of Jesus, speaking to us during the pandemic and offering us more abundant life. *How has the pandemic affected your faith/hope/love? and How has your faith/ hope/love affected the pandemic?* Both questions allow us to get the fuller picture of how Jesus is speaking to us and wanting to shepherd us, at this time, to life more abundant.

The pandemic has affected my faith/hope/love and my faith/hope/love has responded to the pandemic in many personal ways. I'll share that my more abundant life has come through a new and different appreciation of my vocation. Even twenty years in, I am amazed at how in this difficult time, God has given me a newness to my purpose. In my care and protection of the parish with the challenges the pandemic has brought, in the deeper call to prayer, in my great desire I have to celebrate the sacraments for people and on behalf of people, all these things have been what I have been "hearing" Jesus 'say' to me. I have also "heard" Jesus calling me to pray with a new awareness of what the Body of Christ means, even because of the absence of the congregation. Spiritual Communion has always been a strong reality to me, but from a personal viewpoint as a disciple of Christ. During the pandemic, I have been given the grace to realize a new depth of the reality of Spiritual Communion as a priest. My vocation to prayer for all in the parish (which always includes all in the parish boundaries) has allowed my faith/hope/love to 'expand' into the challenge of the void of the empty church. My faith/hope and love has made me aware of the more abundant life to desire to have Spiritual Communion with all who desire to have Spiritual Communion with God. It is a deeper experience, a more abundant experience. The more abundant life, in this and other experiences, is hard to put into words, but the effect on me has been great.

We are called to experience life according to the maxim: "each day is a new beginning following in the footsteps of Christ." I encourage you to reflect on the invitation of God in each new day to renew your faith/hope/love to grow in this experience of the pandemic knowing without a doubt that our Lord, "Came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

## **Reflection by Father Lew**

### **The Invisible Enemy**

Greetings sisters and brothers! Here we are, another week in lockdown, in a desperate effort to keep each other safe from the Invisible Enemy. Unless you are a scientist, you and I have not seen the coronavirus, but each morning we are made aware of its effects as we listen or read about the rising death toll in the United States and throughout the world.

In this Easter season the scripture readings proclaim the Good News of a vaccine to combat another type of Invisible Enemy. Ground zero for this enemy goes back to Adam and Eve, when they disobeyed God, and the spiritual virus of sin entered the human condition. Over the generations many ideologies, gurus, and self-help programs have tried, unsuccessful, to deal with the dysfunction in human relationships brought about by the reality of sin.

In this weekend's first reading in the Acts of Apostles, St. Peter proclaims Good News about a new vaccine to combat the power of sin, found not in another ideology but by an encounter with a living person: "Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus who you crucified." Peter preached in such power that the people were "cut to the heart", and asked Peter and the apostles, "What must we do?"

What a wonderful question? Not just to know that Jesus is the vaccine, but what must I do to bring Him into the blood stream of daily life? The pandemic has certainly been a wake-up as to the fragility of our lives....our plans...our jobs...our portfolio...and in so many of the facets of life in which we place our trust.. So, "What must we do?"

**Jesus, show us how to trust in You!**

## Reflection by Deacon Gary

Jesus often identifies himself as the Shepherd and says: “My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me.” When he said that to his Jewish listeners, they must have gasped in shock. Because, for the Jews, the Shepherd of the flock of Israel is none other than the Lord God himself.

Most of us, don’t often see a shepherd or a sheep in our daily travels, but we do know that sheep know who their shepherd is and follow him wherever he goes. They know his voice so when he calls, they come to him. And they don’t follow anyone else’s voice.

Did you ever realize that we are the same way. People do not hear voices they do not recognize. Let me give you a few examples and all of us can relate. When we are in a place that is very crowded and everyone is talking, such as a place we all hope we can visit sometime soon in the future (i.e. a baseball game, a football game, a concert, or even the mall), we don’t realize how we block out all the background noise, which is actually other people’s voices. The only voice we actually hear is the voice of our loved one or friend. We hear that voice first because we recognize it.

Also, when someone is trying to find us, we will hear their voice from a distance when they call out to us. Near or far, we hear the voice that matters. The only reason we can hear our loved one’s voice above the din of thousands of others is that we are focused, sometimes even straining to hear that voice. And that’s how we are with Jesus.

The voice of Jesus is a demanding voice. To hear his voice, we must sometimes strain, both because the din is so loud and because our sinful nature makes us inclined to shut out the words we don’t like to hear.

If a person has not taken the time to learn the voice of Jesus or hasn’t been taught how that voice sounds, he will not hear Jesus when our Lord speaks amidst all the other competing voices.

You’re here today because you hear that voice. And, as I often tell my friend, John, by hearing Jesus’ voice, you are a FFOC. You may wonder, what’s an FFOC? A Faithful Follower of Christ.

I don’t know if you’ve noticed the stained glass window in the church of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. It is located behind the altar on the right. So when we’re back in the church, take a few minutes to check it out. It’s a perfect depiction of Jesus taking care of us, His Sheep. Be safe and hope to see you soon!

## Reflection by Deacon George

### **John 20:19-31 - Doubt**

It is unfortunate that Thomas has been given the name “the doubter,” because every disciple was uncertain and in disbelief following the horrific torture and execution of their friend. Otherwise, why would they have abandoned him? Or betrayed him? Or hidden themselves in the upper room? Or left the city for Emmaus? It was through such uncertainty that we should see ways that lead people toward faith.

First there is the “other disciple”. The one who outran Peter. When he enters the tomb, he notes after seeing the burial garments rolled up that “*he saw and came to believe.*” That “other disciple” represents those of us who come to our faith early and believe. Mary Magdalene is next. She went to the tomb because the Jewish preparation of the dead was hastily completed due to nightfall and the Passover. She returns once the requirements of the feast are met to complete her sacred burial obligations and she too finds it empty. But as she begins to leave in despair she inquires of a gardener if he knows anything about the removal of the body. Jesus, the mistaken gardener, simply speaks her name “*Mary*” and she immediately recognizes his voice. Mary represents those of us who hear the Lord’s voice, are called, and believe.

Those wavering disciples come into play all throughout our Easter stories, offering insight into the stumbling ways of the first believers. Hiding behind locked doors they cower for fear of both the Jews and the Roman authorities. They are marked men, defensive and hiding because of their association with the criminal, Jesus. Yet even with the doors barred, Christ appears in their midst and says, “*peace be with you.*” These disciples represent those who rejoice after seeing what our Lord does when he breaks through the barriers we set in place and believe.

We then encounter those who walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Jesus quietly joins them, casually listening, questioning, and even challenging their assumptions. It wasn’t until they invited him to stay with them and sat down at table together that they recognized him, experiencing something profound throughout their entire encounter. These two disciples represent when Jesus walks beside us and participates in the mundane aspects of our lives. We feel his influence even when we aren’t entirely aware of his presence in our daily routine and believe.

Finally, we have the main character, a man who appears every year on the weekend following Easter – Thomas. For one reason or another he is not present with the others when they first see our risen Lord. Like many of us who undergo tragedy or hardship, he probably needed to withdraw just to be alone. Yet in his absence, his having been missing in action, he separated himself from the hope and consolation that others provide in times of sorrow and fear. And, even though Thomas did not believe the others, he was not cast out, or marginalized. This “cafeteria apostle” was permitted to remain with the group.

Thomas represents those of us who struggle, who look for tangible signs and who wrestle with our faith each and every day, yet strive to believe. We make every excuse over why we do not need to be a part of the Church, seated with other doubter’s, sinners, hypocrites and fanatical believers. We can be spiritual, but not religious. We can do this our way, according to our own terms. But it is that withdrawal, that lack of fellowship that challenges both Thomas’ and our faith.

Fr. Bausch tells the story of an elderly pastor who went to visit a parishioner whom had not been present for a long time. When all of the person’s arguments had concluded over why he no longer needed Church, the elderly priest simply walked over to the fire, separated a single piece of coal and watched it get cold and die out. He then kicked the cooled piece of coal back among the others and it quickly reignited and glowed. Everyone needs the comfort and support of others. We need fellowship, we need fellow pilgrims in order for our hearts to burn and our actions to warm others. Thomas in the midst of profound disagreement remained in the company of his friends, because the support of that emerging Church was essential.

So, no matter where you or I are during this pandemic – the most important thing to recognize is that regardless of how strong or weak our faith may be – *we are at least on the journey.* Doubt becomes most severe during tragic times, permitting each of us to experience the skepticism of Thomas. Whenever, we experience the disbelief that someone who is dead to us can be alive. Or feel the uncertainty when real scars in relationships need to be touched, peeled away or probed. Or become suspect when someone who has been abandoned by the closest of friends can wholeheartedly forgive us and return us to the loving bonds of friendship.

Year in and year out we listen to the powerful passion stories and hear the amazing gospel of the stone rolled back and our risen Lord being among us. Yet our fears, problems and sorrows prevent us from seeing the risen one where a spirit of fear and helplessness suddenly gives rise to new possibilities. Where the alcoholic no longer drinks, the abuser no longer mistreats. Where the addict no longer requires a fix or the cancer treatment ends and one’s hair and appetite returns. Where we hear the cry of a newborn child or see a veteran absent her own legs running a marathon on Teflon replacements. When wonderful dreams become possible, or men and women change their ways and our aspirations become realized – tombs are opened, resurrection takes place and Christ is among us. And in that, as separated and struggling believers, we should have no doubt.



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