

# MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED

January 21, 2018 – Third Sunday Ordinary Time

## Spirituality Ponderings

### Tough Topic: Pro-Life and Fear

Last October, I had the privilege of preaching at the Respect Life Convention. For my spiritual ponderings today, I would like to share with you that homily.

I was ordained to the priesthood on Memorial Day weekend, but I would not begin my first assignment as a priest to nearly a month later. I arrived at my first assignment full of excitement and energy. My pastor handed me the keys to the parish and then began his month long vacation. I remember praying before I went to sleep that night hoping that the “emergency line”, a special extension set up in order to get in touch with a priest after office hours, would not ring. Around two o'clock in the morning the phone rang and I answered it. As I answered the phone, I remember simultaneously praying and hoping that the phone call was not about a sick child. Once again though God did not answer my prayer for it was about a one-year-old who was dying of cancer. She was not expected to make it through the night.

I quickly got dressed and drove to the hospital. The whole time, I kept trying to figure out what I was going to say. I do not remember much of what happen that night except, I know that I did not do much of the talking. The young girls parents with an amazing faith

told me of their loving daughter and of the pain they were feeling and then they told me something that has always stuck with me. They said that if they would have to do it all over again with all the pain and heartache that they would because they loved their daughter that much.

Jenna would make it through the night, her little body fighting off the staff infection. Getting to know little Jenna over the next few months was a great blessing. One of my favorite memories of being a priest was the opportunity to celebrate Mass with Jenna and her family in their home at the suggestion of my pastor.

I can still recall with vivid details sitting in the back of the Church praying before the all school Mass that I was about to celebrate when Jenna's father walked in and informed that Jenna had passed away. I prayed with him for a moment and then began Mass. I was so broken up that when I could not remember my homily and so I simply asked the children to join me in praying a “Hail Mary” for Jenna.

A few years later, I found myself in the back of the parish Church as the 6PM Youth Mass was about to come to an end. I had not been the celebrant that evening, but I wanted to greet the people as they left the Church. As I walked into the Church, I caught sight of Ann.



Ann was a person in the parish that I had wanted to introduce myself to for some time because I had known her husband Ken pretty well from working with him, as he was a core member for our youth ministry program. Ann and Ken had three children and at this time Ann was standing in the back of the Church trying to keep their youngest quiet. For some reason that night, though, I chickened out and never introduced myself to her. The next day as I received a call because Ann had been diagnosed that morning with terminal cancer and Ann was told that she only had three months to live at most. I traveled down to the hospital and spent the rest of day with Ken and Ann.

Over the next three months, I would spend a lot of time with Ann as she prepared to move onto the next life. I can remember one time Ann and I were talking and she told me that she used to hate her husband Ken because when he got into the car he could listen

to any radio station that he wanted to but when she got into the car she had to listen to Barney the Dinosaur and the Wiggles. She went on to tell me how now she realized how silly she had been and that she would do almost anything to be in her car driving her children

around listening to those children's songs over and over again.

One day as if she was reading my mind, she told me that even though the cancer was painful she would not go back if she could and shorten her time

through suicide for she now in a special way saw time as a treasure and she was going to enjoy every moment she could with her husband, children, and the rest of her family. (to be Continued)

## Breaking Open the Word

### January 21, 2018 Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Lectionary: 68 Gospel MK 1:14-20

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him. He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.

#### Spiritual Reflection:

"As a follower of Christ, believe above all that you have been redeemed, forgiven, and are infinitely loved by God. The Lord is not a Savior who forces us to love and reverence him; rather he is the Savior who invites us to love him without reservation."

– Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan. God continues to invite others and us to participate in His ministry.

#### Spiritual Questions:

1. How has God invited you this week to be his co-worker?
2. Why does God not use force?
3. How can you imitate God's method of invitation instead of relying on force?
4. Are you willing to leave old way of life behind if necessary?
5. Have you invited anyone this week?



## Prayers for the Week

### PRAYER FOR MY VOCATION

Almighty Father, You send the gift of Your Holy Spirit for the building of Your Kingdom. With the help of this Spirit, give me the grace to listen to Your call in my life. Give me strength and courage to do Your will. Grant me wisdom and humility to choose Your way even when I find it most difficult. Lord, bless all the faithful in Your Church who are seeking holiness. But in a special way, watch over priests, brothers, and sisters. Help them to give their lives in joyful service that they may be signs of Your presence among us. We

beg you, Father, to fill our hearts with a burning desire to follow Jesus. May there be many, who offer their lives for the service of Your Church, that all may come to know and love You. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### PRAYER FOR MY VOCATION

Dear Heavenly Father, I believe that you are the Way, the Truth and the Life. You alone love me for who I truly am and for what I am able to become. Though I make repeated mistakes, you continually offer me new opportunities to grow

every moment of the day. Your Son lived the Way that I must choose if I'm to be transformed and to fully develop my potential. His Way is the only path that leads to true personhood. Attuned to your Truth, Father, I am capable of leading a wholesome and worthwhile life. The depth of my service to others is



dependent on my grasp of your Truth. May your Spirit overflow into my life that I may have your Life to the full. Give me the strength and the courage to be all that I can be and not to settle for less. Realizing that my life is a precious gift from

you, may I integrate Your Way, Your Truth and Your Life, and make it my own. Amen.

**PRAYER FOR MY VOCATION**

Dear Father, shine your light upon me so that I may see my true vocation. Give me the grace to hear your word and be an example to others of your love for us. I pray for all in the priesthood, consecrated lives, marriage and single life, and for all who are listening to your call, that they may answer you in their vocation. Thank you for sending your son Jesus, Lord of the Harvest, help me to follow His example. May I freely, courageously and lovingly respond. Amen.

**Catholic Trivia**

 <p><b>Last Week's Answers</b></p>	 <p><b>This Week's Questions</b></p>
<p>Put the following Salvation History Items in Order</p> <p>#2 Joshua leads the Israelites into the Promise Land.</p> <p>#3 Nehemiah returns from Exile</p> <p>#4 Judas Maccabees lead the Jews in revolt</p> <p>#1 Moses sees the burning bush</p> <p>#5 Jesus and Peter meet</p> <p>#6 Jesus rises from the grave.</p>	<p>Put a C next to the Cardinal Virtues and a T next to the Theological Virtues</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Prudence                      <input type="checkbox"/> Justice</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Faith                                <input type="checkbox"/> Fortitude</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hope                                <input type="checkbox"/> Charity</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Temperance</p>

**Quotes of the Week**

Nothing is so strong as gentleness; nothing so gentle as real strength. ~ St. Francis de Sales

In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God's gifts! ~ Pope Francis  
 An example I often use to illustrate the reality of vanity, is this: look at the peacock; it's beautiful if you look at it from the front. But if

you look at it from behind, you discover the truth... Whoever gives in to such self-absorbed vanity has huge misery hiding inside them." ~ Pope Francis

Holiness does not consist in not making mistakes or never sinning. Holiness grows with capacity for conversion, repentance, willingness to begin again, and above all with

the capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness.  
~ Cardinal Ratzinger now Pope Benedict XVI  
Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues  
hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not

exist there cannot be any other virtue except  
in mere appearance. ~ St. Augustine

## Pro-Life Corner

**Pro-Life Quote:** "The right to life is the first among human rights." – Pope Francis

**Pro-Life Prayer for January:** Prayer for the Unborn

You are our strength, the light by which we walk, the truth by which we talk.  
You are our hope, the promise to which we hold, the story that must be told.  
You are the peace this world cannot provide, that overcomes our pride.  
You are our God, the One whose name we praise to whom our hands are raised.  
Please help us in our everyday lives to be guardians of life. May the weak and vulnerable, the poor and outcast, and those in need of mercy, find in us a pathway to you. Amen



## Saint Monica Society Prayer For January

**Christmas Prayer for Fallen Away Catholics**

By your Grace we are forgiven, in your peace our lives are lived. By your touch we know healing, in your strength are we made whole. When this is forgotten, our focus on self, your face obscured, forgive and restore. Take our mustard seed of faith and let it grow, take root and blossom in our hearts and lives and in a special way please return our friends, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters back to the true faith. Through our Savior Jesus Christ and in no other name do we ask this. Amen

### St. Monica Society

Please join us in praying a special prayer each month for Catholics who have fallen away from their faith.

## Catholic Humor

### Church Mice



# Church Mice

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