

**Sunday, May 17, 2020
Sixth Sunday Of Easter**

During these anxious and challenging days, I want to thank you for your prayers and ongoing support of the ministries of our Parish. Even though you are not physically present at the celebration of the Liturgy, you and your family are in our hearts as we pray for you and with you. I also thank you for your concern for the poor and forgotten through your support of our Saint Luke the Evangelist Food Pantry.

In the coming days and weeks, we will be severely challenged as a Parish community in terms of finances. We do not have any cash reserves on which to fall, and salaries, supplies and utilities continue to be a part of the operations of our Parish.

I have already consulted with members of our Finance Council and have put in place various cost saving strategies to help us ride out the Corona storm. I am deeply grateful for your continuing support of the work of our Parish, even in your absence. Your ongoing support will mean that the Parish can continue the work of ministry for the present and will help us look toward a future when we are all together again.

If you would like assistance in making electronic contributions, please see the Parish Giving section in the right-hand column of this page.

May God console us, heal us and bless us in the days to come.

Father Albert, obl. SB

RESTROOM BREAKS DURING MASS

Attention Parents

Please be sure to accompany your young children when they need to use the restroom during Mass. This is for their safety and your peace of mind. Thank you for your assistance.

✠ **PARISH TITHING** ✠

Our Parish needs to take in \$7,000.00 each week in order to make ends meet. Thank you for your generosity to our parish! Your weekly contribution helps ensure that the parish remains a vibrant community. Please remember to submit your weekly gift even if you will be away. We depend upon your support!

**NO PUBLIC MASS ON
MAY 10, 2020
MAILED AND ELECTRONIC DONATION
AMOUNTS WILL APPEAR
IN THE MAY 31, 2020 BULLETIN**

PARISH GIVING

Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish has engaged *Parish Giving* to provide parishioners with an opportunity to make your offertory and other contributions through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Parish Giving is a simple, secure, and convenient way to manage your stewardship without weekly envelopes and without worries. It allows you to select contribution amounts and special collections right from your own computer or smart phone. You can be a good steward for the Parish even when you are away from the area on a weekend. Parish Giving allows you to print out a report detailing your contributions for the year. This program is available to parishioners at no cost. Log on to the St. Luke the Evangelist Parish website at <http://stlukenh.org>, click on the Parish Giving logo, and follow the easy registration instructions.

UPCOMING SECOND & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

May 17, 2020	Fuel
May 21, 2020	Ascension of the Lord
May 24, 2020	Catholic Communications

**Out of respect, please remember to
silence or turn off
your cell phones during Mass.
Thank you!**



Suggested Weekly Contribution Based on Income

Annual Income	5% Commitment annually/ weekly	3% Commitment annually/ weekly
\$100,000	\$5,000/ \$100	\$3,000/ \$60
\$75,000	\$3,750/ \$75	\$2,250/ \$45
\$60,000	\$3,000/ \$60	\$1,800/ \$36
\$50,000	\$2,500/ \$50	\$1,500/ \$30
\$40,000	\$2,000/ \$40	\$1,200/ \$24
\$30,000	\$1,500/ \$30	\$900/ \$18
\$25,000	\$1,250/ \$25	\$750/ \$15
\$15,000	\$750/ \$15	\$450/ \$9

Suggested Weekly Contribution Based on a Percentage Increase

Your Current Offertory Contribution	25% Increase	30% Increase	40% Increase
\$75.00	\$93.75	\$97.50	\$105.00
\$50.00	\$62.50	\$65.00	\$70.00
\$40.00	\$50.00	\$52.00	\$56.00
\$35.00	\$43.75	\$45.50	\$49.00
\$30.00	\$37.50	\$39.00	\$42.00
\$25.00	\$31.25	\$32.50	\$35.00
\$20.00	\$25.00	\$26.00	\$28.00
\$15.00	\$18.75	\$19.50	\$21.00
\$10.00	\$12.50	\$13.00	\$14.00
\$5.00	\$6.25	\$6.50	\$7.00

✠ PARISH NEWS ✠

PAINT THE TOWN!

Our Parish community continues with our Capital Campaign. Our next projects include exterior painting for the church and Parish house in Newton. We'd also like to paint the interior sanctuary of the church in Newton and complete some electrical upgrades to the church.

Other possible projects include work on our Plaistow and Newton parking lots, and ramp access to the church in Plaistow.

Can you help?

Any contribution is welcome. Make checks payable to
Saint Luke the Evangelist – Capital Campaign.

SANCTUARY CANDLES

The Sanctuary Candles in both Newton and Plaistow may be offered in memory or honor of a loved one. The suggested offering for each is \$10.00. Please call the Parish Office at 382-8324.

VIGIL LIGHT

The Vigil Light in front of the Blessed Mother Icon in Newton may be also be offered in memory or honor of a loved one. The suggested offering for each is \$10.00.

FOR OUR RECORDS

We need your help to keep our records current. If there are any births, deaths, marriages, moves, or address changes in your family, please notify the Parish Office at jtremlay@stluketheevangelist.net or call 603-382-8324. If you are new to our parish, registration forms are available at the entrances of both churches. You can also find a registration form on our website at <http://stlukenh.org>.

AMAZON SMILE

AmazonSmile.com is the same market platform as Amazon.com, but with the added benefit of allowing customers to donate 0.5% of the price of items purchased to a charitable organization. Please register today to start shopping and donating at www.amazon.com. For questions, please call the Parish Office at 603-382-8324. Be sure to choose:

St Luke the Evangelist Parish, Plaistow.

THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN FOR SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST PARISH

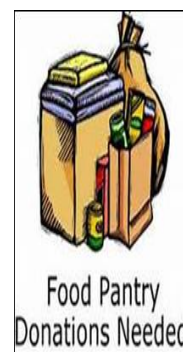
FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

If you would like an "end of year" financial statement of your contributions to the parish for 2019, **please call Jackie** at the Parish Office at 382-8324. **Financial Statements are issued on a request only basis.**

ST. LUKE'S WEBSITE! <http://stlukenh.org>

ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST FOOD PANTRY

Food or care items are always needed – donations can be dropped off at Church or are welcome at the Parish Office during regular business hours. Cash donations for food are always welcome – make checks payable to **St. Luke the Evangelist Food Pantry**. All donations to the Food Pantry go toward helping the needy of our communities.



FOOD PANTRY HOURS

Wednesday from 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

Thursday from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Friday from 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

For more information, call the St. Luke Food Pantry at **603-819-4949**.

WHILE AWAY THIS SPRING...

We appreciate all of you who remember to send in your Parish Offertory during the Spring even when on vacation or visiting other parishes. Thank you for remembering that our expenses also continue through the Spring months. We invite others to consider doing the same before or even after you return home.

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

✠ WEEKLY CALENDAR ✠

Sunday, May 17
CHURCHES IN NEWTON AND PLAISTOW
OPEN FOR PRIVATE PRAYER
UNTIL 12:00 NOON

Monday, May 18
HOLY ANGELS CHURCH OPEN FOR
PRIVATE PRAYER FROM
8:30 AM TO 4:00 PM

Tuesday, May 19
HOLY ANGELS CHURCH OPEN FOR
PRIVATE PRAYER FROM
8:30 AM TO 4:00 PM

Wednesday, May 20
HOLY ANGELS CHURCH OPEN FOR
PRIVATE PRAYER FROM
8:30 AM TO 4:00 PM

Thursday, May 21
HOLY ANGELS CHURCH OPEN FOR
PRIVATE PRAYER FROM
8:30 AM TO 4:00 PM

8:30 AM	Adoration Begins	<i>Newton</i>
8:30 PM	Adoration Ends	<i>Newton</i>

3:00 PM	Sacrament of Reconciliation	<i>Plaistow</i>
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Sunday, May 24
CHURCHES IN NEWTON AND PLAISTOW
OPEN FOR PRIVATE PRAYER
UNTIL 12:00 NOON IF NO PUBLIC MASS IS ALLOWED

**St. Vincent
de Paul
Society**



We're looking for new members! Have you ever wondered just what the St. Vincent de Paul Society is all about? Plan to join us at our next scheduled meeting **Wednesday, June 17 at 7:00 PM** in the Holy Angels Church Hall for some light refreshments and information on how you can become a member of this vibrant, caring group of people. We look forward to meeting you and answering any questions you may have. See you on June 17!

If you seek assistance or need information about the St. Vincent de Paul Society, call 603-382-8324 x315.

**Hear, OH LORD, and answer me
for I am poor and needy.**

✠ MASS INTENTIONS ✠

Saturday, May 16 ~ Vigil / Sixth Sunday of Easter
Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; 1 Pt 3:15-18; Jn 14:15-21
Robert Cooper by his family
No Public Mass

Sunday, May 17 ~ Sixth Sunday of Easter
Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; 1 Pt 3:15-18; Jn 14:15-21
Kenneth Jenkins by his family
No Public Mass
In Thanksgiving to St. Michael the Archangel
No Public Mass

Monday, May 18 ~ John I, Pope and Martyr
Acts 16:11-15; Jn 15:26—16:4a
Barry Cohen by Jeanne Sullivan
No Public Mass

Tuesday, May 19 ~ Easter Weekday
Acts 16:22-34; Jn 16:5-11
People of the Parish
No Public Mass

Wednesday, May 20 ~ Bernardine of Siena, Priest
Acts 17:15, 22—18:1; Jn 16:12-15 (Day)
Acts 1:1-11; Eph 1:17-23; Mt 28:16-20 (Vigil)
Frances Fleming by her family
No Public Mass

Thursday, May 21 ~ The Ascension of the Lord
Acts 1:1-11; Eph 1:17-23; Mt 28:16-20
People of the Parish
No Public Mass

Friday, May 22 ~ Rita of Cascia, Religious
Acts 18:9-18; Jn 16:20-23
No Mass

Saturday, May 23 ~ Easter Weekday
Acts 18:23-28; Jn 16:23b-28 (Day)
Acts 1:12-14; 1 Pt 13-16; Jn 17:1-11a (Vigil)
4:00 PM Frances Fleming by Jackie Tremblay
Plaistow (IF public Mass allowed)

Sunday, May 24 ~ Seventh Sunday of Easter
Acts 1:12-14; 1 Pt 13-16; Jn 17:1-11a
8:00 AM Tilly Massaro by the Stanley family
Newton (IF public Mass is allowed)
10:00 AM Kyle DiPerri by his family
Plaistow (IF public Mass is allowed)

PRAYER LINE

St. Luke's offers a prayer line as a resource for those seeking prayer assistance. To submit your prayer request please call Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 314 or email her at csmith@stluketheevangelist.net.

MAY 17, 2020

✠ FAITH FORMATION & PARISH INFORMATION ✠

PARISH OFFICE CLOSED

In observance of the Memorial Day holiday, the Parish Office will be **closed on Monday, May 25**. The Office will reopen at 8:30 AM on Tuesday, May 26.

Our regular office hours are Monday-Thursday 8:30 AM to 12:00 Noon and 1:00 to 4:30 PM. The Office is closed on Fridays.

RCIA

The **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults** is the process by which people become members of the Roman Catholic Church. If you or someone you know is interested in inquiring about becoming a member of the Roman Catholic Church, call Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 305 or email her at csmith@stluketheevangelist.net.

ADULT CONFIRMATION

Are you an adult who has been Baptized and received Eucharist, but has not celebrated the sacrament of Confirmation? The adult Confirmation process is an opportunity to complete the Sacraments of Initiation. If you would like to prepare for Confirmation, or if you have questions, call Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 305 or email her at csmith@stluketheevangelist.net.

PARENTS BAPTISM PREPARATION SESSION

The monthly preparation session for infant Baptism will be held after the 10:00 AM Liturgy on **Sunday, June 7, 2020** in the Parish Office living room. All parents planning to celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism are welcome. Families wishing to celebrate Baptism in the Church must be registered (according to Church Canon Law) and practicing (attending Sunday Mass) for 3 full months before a Baptism can be scheduled. The use of the envelope system is always optional; however, it does guarantee a manner of accountability. For most families, the Pastor or staff can easily verify attendance during these three months. Church Canon Law also regulates baptismal sponsors (godparents). Sponsors must be at least 16, fully initiated (having received Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation), and be practicing Catholics living Christian lives consistent with the Church's teaching. Please see Fr. Albert with questions.



VIGIL LIGHT

The Vigil Light in front of the Blessed Mother Icon at Mary Mother of the Church will burn in loving memory of **Wallace Antczak**



ADORATION

We are truly blessed to have times for Adoration of Our Lord in our Parish. This time of prayer and intercession is not only a source of great grace for the individual, but it is a great source of grace for us as a parish family, as well.

We have many who have made the commitment to spend an hour each week with our Eucharistic Lord, **but** we need more people so there will be at least two people at each hour. We are also looking for people who would be able to substitute.

**Newton – Thursday
8:30 AM – 8:30 PM**

If you can commit to one hour a week in Adoration of our Lord, or if you can be a substitute, please contact Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 305 or email her at csmith@stluketheevangelist.net.

The Church in Plaistow is open all day on Wednesdays for people to stop by and pray before the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle.

✠ PARISH DIRECTORY ✠

Parish Office	382-8324
Parish Prayer Line	382-8324 x 314
St. Vincent de Paul Society	382-8324 x 315
St. Luke's Food Pantry	819-4949
Preschool	382-9783
Presentation of Mary Convent	382-2744

Fr. Albert Tremblay
Cathy Smith
Joyce Szapa
Jackie Tremblay
Thomas Kondel
Val Barczak
Parish Council

fr.albert@stluketheevangelist.net
csmith@stluketheevangelist.net
jszczapa@stluketheevangelist.net
jtremblay@stluketheevangelist.net
tkondel@stluketheevangelist.net
mvmbarczak@comcast.net
parishcouncil@stluketheevangelist.net

✠ Parish News ~ Youth News ~ Around The Diocese ✠

CREIGHTON FERTILITYCARE SYSTEM

The Creighton FertilityCare System is a highly effective and morally acceptable natural method of family planning. It is healthy and strengthens marriage. It is used to achieve a pregnancy or avoid a pregnancy and can be useful in the diagnosis and treatment of reproductive disease. Online introductory classes will be held on the first Wednesday and third Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM. For more information, contact Mary Menendez, CFCEP, St. Gerard Majella FertilityCare Services, at 603-642-8050 or CreightonFertility@yahoo.com.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES NH UPDATE

**All Programs Continue To Offer Support
During The COVID-19 Crisis**

In this challenging and unprecedented time, Catholic Charities NH continues to serve the needs of the vulnerable across New Hampshire. While most of its physical locations are closed, all of their programs remain operational. The staff is working remotely and is accessible to serve individuals and families facing increasing hardship during this difficult period. If you have any questions or require assistance, please contact 603-669-3030. You may also visit www.cc-nh.org/programs for more information on how Catholic Charities NH continues to adapt to changing needs statewide.

CREMATION AND THE CHURCH

On October 25, 2016, the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a new instruction on the burial of the dead and on the conservation of the ashes in case of cremation. The instruction reiterated the long held view that the Church is not opposed to the practice of cremation, though it continues to recommend that the bodies of the deceased be buried in cemeteries or other sacred places. **However, the new document insists that ashes should not be kept in private homes, and that the scattering of ashes in the air, on land, or at sea is not permitted.** The instruction also insists that remains may not be divided among various family members, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry, or other objects. Please contact Father Albert in the Parish Office with any questions. Brochures about the Rite of Christian Funerals are available at the Church entrances.

HOSPITAL VISITATION

If you or someone you know is in the hospital and wants to receive a visit, please contact the Parish Office at 603-382-8324. If you or someone you know faces a hospital admission, make sure they know to inform the hospital that they are Catholic and are members of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish. If a person cannot make this information known at the time of admission, a family member may be able to make that information known to the hospital staff.

PROJECT RACHEL

If you or someone you know is suffering after abortion, confidential non-judgmental help is available. Call Project Rachel's national toll-free number at 1-888-456-HOPE (4673) or visit www.hopeafterabortion.org.

**ALL ABOARD FOR FUN AT
VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL**

**Rocky Railway
Jesus' Power Pulls Us Through**

Make your Reservations early.

Sign up NOW.

The train will depart daily from 9:00 AM to Noon

June 22 to June 26

St. Luke the Evangelist Parish

Call 603-382-8324 x 305 for more information.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

ST JUDE COUNCIL # 6617

**GIVE YOUR PARISH COMMUNITY
1 HOUR A MONTH**

The Knights of Columbus are a vital and vibrant part of the St Luke the Evangelist Parish. We welcome any practicing Catholic man 18 or older to join the Knights, whose main purpose is charitable works in support of our parish and community. Joining is simple – talk to a brother Knight or you can now join on-line. Go to www.kofc.org/joinus. Your Council is involved in many activities from collecting money for people with intellectual disabilities through the Tootsie Roll Drive to the annual St Jude Golf Open which raises money for parish families in need. The list is as long as you want it to be. Do you have a certain passion you would like to get involved in? Come join us and make it a reality! We are Catholic men. We live by principles informed by faith. We are sons, fathers, husbands, and grandfathers. Join us on life's greatest adventure to discover the man God calls you to be. Feel free to call Dan Sullivan at 603-770-4803, email him at dans49@comcast.net, or catch him at the 8:00 AM Sunday Mass in Newton. For more information about the Knights, go to www.kofc.org/un/en/todays-knights/what-we-do.html

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER



The Advocate

Heavenly Father,
Sanctify our hearts with the gift of
your Spirit.
Empower us to continue the ministry
of Jesus—
to speak the truth with joy and gentleness,
to comfort others in their sorrow
and suffering,
to withstand evil in all its forms.

Reveal your Son's enduring presence within
and around us.
Help us reveal him to others in all that we do
so that your love may be known
and embraced by everyone
and the world brought to new life
in your Spirit.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, May 17, 2020

For the Family

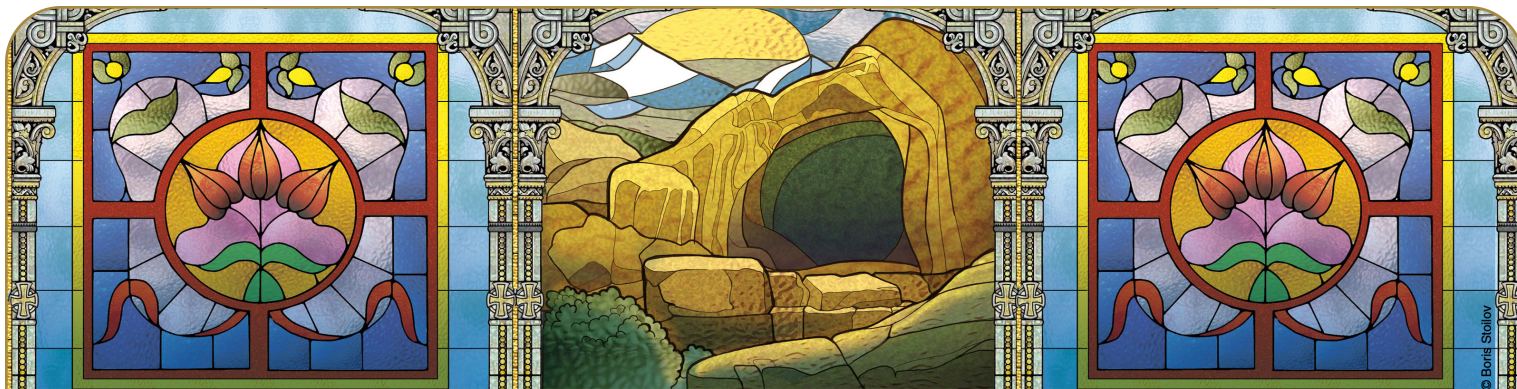


Today's Readings: Acts 8:5–8, 14–17; Psalm 66:1–3, 4–5, 6–7, 16, 20; 1 Peter 3:15–18; John 14:15–21. In John's account of the Gospel, Jesus refers to multiple commandments, but he gives only one: love one another. To love people—and we would add, to cherish all of God's creation—is to love the Risen Lord and, through him, the Father. That love first flowed the other way, from the Father, through the Son, to the world. Love for and from God pulls the world back together. The Advocate, God's own Spirit, unites people and assures them that they are and always will be God's children.

The Advocate also empowers believers to act as Jesus did. Philip fulfills this commissioning perfectly: he pro-

claims Christ, expels demons, and heals people. Then, when the Samaritans accept the Gospel, centuries of enmity are overcome as Jews and Samaritans are bound together by Baptism and the Holy Spirit. They become sisters and brothers of Christ and part of the new family of God, the Father.

Our Second Reading urges us to act as Christ did, both for our sake and for the sake of others. People will not always be as receptive to us as the Samaritans were to Philip. Only by responding intelligently but peaceably will we persuade people of the enduring joy that comes from following Christ. By speaking and acting with gentle and patient persistence, we will be brought to life in the Spirit.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, May 18

Journeys

The Advocate that Jesus promised has unmistakably filled St. Paul. For the rest of the Easter season we will hear about Paul's extensive travels and missionary work. Paul takes every opportunity to tell others about Christ and to enter into fellowship with them. Make a map of your Christian journey. What significant moments are on that map? *Today's Readings: Acts 16:11–15; Psalm 149:1b–2, 3–4, 5–6a and 9b; John 15:26–16:4a.*

Tuesday, May 19

Revealing Righteousness

Jesus promises to send an Advocate who will reveal whether a person is ultimately righteous or sinful. In Acts, the jailer recognizes that Paul and Silas are righteous despite their imprisonment. The jailer is so impressed by their behavior that he listens to them and is baptized. Are there people you don't listen to because you are certain they are wrong? Do they have some words of truth to offer you? *Today's Readings: Acts 16:22–34; Psalm 138:1–2ab, 2cde–3, 7c–8; John 16:5–11.*

Wednesday, May 20

A Gospel for All

Jesus helps his disciples prepare for his death. He also promises that the "Spirit of truth" will give them insight into future events so that they can act in his name. This Spirit is active in Paul as he preaches in Athens, a city renowned for its diversity. Paul's ministry in that city anticipates the spread of the Gospel to the wider and still more diverse world. Today, the Gospel is lived and expressed in countless ways. What are some Catholic practices unique to your area or culture? *Today's Readings: Acts 17:15, 22–18:1; Psalm 148:1–2, 11–12, 13, 14; John 16:12–15.*

Thursday, May 21

The Ascension of the Lord

In ancient texts, revered people were sometimes shown being taken up into heaven. Their ascension was a metaphor for divine approval. Luke draws on this imagery to show that God approves of Jesus but also that Jesus shares God's power. Having ascended, Jesus is no longer physically constrained but is spiritually and sacramentally present in those who are baptized. *Today's Readings: Acts 1:1–11; Psalm 47:2–3, 6–7, 8–9; Ephesians 1:17–23; Matthew 28:16–20.*

Thursday of the Sixth Week of Easter

In Acts, we're reminded that Paul did not work alone but counted on other people for material and emotional support. When the disciples learned of Jesus' forthcoming death, they also would have turned to one another for support. Who is a source of strength and comfort for you? *Today's Readings: Acts 18:1–8; Psalm 98:1, 2–3ab, 3cd–4; John 16:16–20.*

Friday, May 22

Everlasting Joy

Jesus insists that his disciples will soon be filled with a joy from God that no one can take away. This promise seems to clash with the passage from Acts where Paul is unjustly treated by a mob and those in authority don't care. Paul, however, compelled by love and gratitude for Christ, continues his ministry. *Today's Readings: Acts 18:9–18; Psalm 47:2–3, 4–5, 6–7; John 16:20–23.*

Saturday, May 23

Our Every Need

Jesus tells his disciples that soon God will give them whatever they ask. Often, however, we receive without asking. Apollos receives much needed instruction about the Christian faith. The Christian community then receives in Apollos a well-formed and compelling preacher. Surprise someone by doing something helpful but unexpected for them today. *Today's Readings: Acts 18:23–28; Psalm 47:2–3, 8–9, 10; John 16:23b–28.*





Bringing Home the Word +

Sixth Sunday of Easter (A)

May 17, 2020

Shepherd, Advocate, Savior

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Jesus promised he wouldn't leave us orphans. As a good shepherd, he was concerned that he would eventually have to leave his sheep. How would he care for them while he was away preparing a place for them? He promises to pray to the Father for an advocate who would be with us always. We are entrusted to an advocate who cares for us until Christ returns.

That advocate is Jesus' very Spirit, the Advocate, the Spirit of truth. The apostles understood this. That's why their first order of business after baptizing a new

believer was to place hands on him or her and pray for the Holy Spirit to come down and confirm the new believer with his gifts. They knew this was essential since it was Jesus' way of staying close to his believers.

This Spirit, which we received at baptism and whose gifts we more actively embraced at confirmation, is a friendship we absolutely need to cultivate. Its inspirations are constantly present, and listening to them is key to maturing as disciples. Who wouldn't want to have direct access to the heart and power of Jesus? Who wouldn't want to have the zeal of the first apostles? Who wouldn't want to have the same spiritual gifts: wisdom, understanding, counsel, courage, knowledge, piety, and awe?

We can. We do. We have the Holy Spirit! If you don't notice his action in your soul the way you'd like to, simply ask the Spirit to help you hear and respond better. Then just stand back and watch him work. +

***This Spirit, which we
received at baptism,
is a friendship we
absolutely need
to cultivate.***

A Word from Pope Francis

There are so many people waiting for us to go out and meet them and look at them with the tenderness that we have experienced and received from our relationship with God. That is where our power lies: not in our ideals and in our personal projects, but rather in the strength of his mercy.

—Address to the order of

Augustinian recollects, October 20, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What increases my awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence in me?
- Which one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit do I most need?

Sunday Readings

Acts 8:5–8, 14–17

Unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people.

1 Peter 3:15–18

Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.

John 14:15–21

[Jesus said,] "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth...You know it, because it remains with you."

Beyond Suicide: Yes, Trust God

By Pegge Bernecker

Weeks after my only child died unexpectedly, the victim of teenage suicide, I sent an email to a friend: “I’m eating chocolate for Lent. That’s a first for me. But I decided that I’m suffering enough and don’t need to give anything up. I think my son’s un-lived life is enough.”

Justin died on a Tuesday, probably around noon. No one knows the time for certain—he had stayed home from school, sick with the flu—or so we thought.

Monday night, before going to an evening class, I opened mail while standing at my kitchen island. A few feet away, Justin sipped chicken soup. An unexpected package contained an advance copy of *Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul II*, which included “One Mother’s Dream,” my story about becoming a foster adoptive mother—Justin’s mother.

I spontaneously asked Justin if he wanted me to read the story to him. He nodded yes and gave me a big smile. Reading the few pages took awhile, but his sixteen-year-old blue eyes grew brighter as I spoke our story: my dream of being a mother, his dream of a forever family. A palpable love flowed between us. I didn’t know this would be the last conversation I would have with my son.



Had I had any inkling of the depth of his medical condition, I never would have left him home alone the next morning. But I didn’t know. He simply said he still didn’t feel well and wanted to sleep. I decided to make my weekly office trip to Denver, an hour away. When I called home that afternoon, the phone rang

and rang. Unable to shake the feeling that something was wrong, I called my husband, insisting he drive home to check on Justin.

Take Up Your Cross

Half an hour later, as I walked through downtown Denver, my phone rang. Answering quickly, I listened to my husband carefully speak five words: “Justin has taken his life.”

I stumbled toward the sidewalk moaning, “No, no, no.” I needed to stop time. Questions erupted inside: Why? How? What if? If only? Suddenly I stopped. A deep part of me began to ask, *What am I going to do with this?*

I didn’t want this, but from a faraway place, I knew I had a choice to make. Shock flooded my veins, numbing me to full comprehension of the unfolding nightmare. My life had previously borne witness to God’s transformative grace in difficult circumstances, and this would be no exception.

My Journey as a Survivor Taught Me...

- Suicide is first a medical issue—not a moral issue.
- No mentally healthy person jokes about suicide. Get professional help!
- Suicide can carry a burden of shame and a social stigma.
- A crisis of faith in God can erupt. God doesn’t interrupt our free will, cause deliberate suffering, or punish us.
- God forgives. Therefore, our question becomes, “Can we forgive?”
- Choose a joyful, expansive memory of the person who has died by suicide. Allow this image to override what you may have seen, imagined, or heard described.
- Go online to research suicide facts, resources, and prevention tips. Share what you learn with others.

Since Justin’s death, suicide has impacted five close friends. Whether days or decades since a suicide death, stories detail unresolved grief, regret, shame, guilt, confusion, blame, anger, denial, and eventual healing. My advice is simple: be present to one another, offer compassion, listen, and just show up. Friendship will then become a healing balm. +



*Risen Lord, you remain with us
and command us to love one
another. Help me to show your
love to all people.*

—From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of
Easter Through Pentecost*, Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 18–23

Monday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 16:11–15 / Jn 15:26–16:4a

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 16:22–34 / Jn 16:5–11

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 17:15, 22–18:1 / Jn 16:12–15

Thursday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 18:1–8 / Jn 16:16–20

Friday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 18:9–18 / Jn 16:20–23

Saturday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 18:23–28 / Jn 16:23b–28