



The Churchman

Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church
250 Woodside Road, Riverside, Illinois 60546 * (708) 442-5250
“Faith Active in Love”
www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org

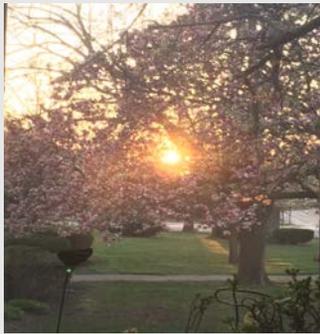
Volume 42

April 2020

Issue 4

We are called together by the Holy Spirit around Word and Sacraments to glorify God the Father, creator of all things, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We trust God to nurture lives of faith and hope, as we serve and give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world.

Holy Week, 2020
schedule to be announced
contingent upon the current
and future
virus suppression efforts.



Please watch for email notices
and regularly visit
the congregational website at
www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org
for announcements.

Blind-Sighted

A sermon for the Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 22nd, 2020 based on the Scripture readings from I Samuel 16:1-13 and John 9:1-41

*Thanks be to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits Thou hast given me, for all the pains and insults Thou hast borne for me. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I see Thee more clearly, love Thee more dearly, and follow Thee more nearly, day by day. Amen. (A prayer by Richard of Chichester [1197—April 3rd, 1253] used in the rock musical *Godspell*.)*

“I came into this world for judgment,” Jesus declared, “so that *those who do not see* may see, and *those who do see* may become blind...” (John 9:39; italics mine).

Years ago, when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the Gulf Coast, a state senator in Alabama claimed *to see clearly* that the hurricanes had hit Mississippi and Louisiana because those states had legalized gambling. God sent the hurricane, so said the senator, *who saw so clearly*, because “New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast have always been known for gambling, sin and wickedness.”

After hearing the senator’s theory on hurricanes a Methodist pastor in Alabama responded by saying, “Well, if the Lord was shooting for all those casinos then he needs to improve his aim because those hurricanes took out only about eight casinos,” the pastor noted, “but [they] destroyed nearly a hundred Methodist churches!”

The rationale goes something like this: If God is good and just, well then, if there is suffering and tragedy, it must be our responsibility.

Some call it the “problem of suffering,” “the mystery of evil,” or “theodicy.” The question of “natural” suffering from illnesses or natural disasters differs from that of “moral evil” in which suffering is related directly or indirectly from the actions of individuals. As James Martin, a Jesuit priest and author, writes during this time of Covid-19, “But leaving aside theological distinctions, the question now consumes the minds of millions of believers, who quail at steadily rising death tolls, struggle with stories of physicians forced to triage patients and recoil at photos of rows of coffins: Why?”

Martin reminds us:

Over the centuries, many answers have been offered about natural suffering, all of them wanting in some way. The most common is that suffering is a test. Suffering tests our faith and strengthens it: “My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance,” says the Letter of James in the New Testament. But while explaining suffering as a test may help in minor trials (patience being tested by an annoying person) it fails in the most painful human experiences. Does God send cancer to ‘test’ a young child? Yes, the child’s parents may learn something about perseverance or faith, but that approach can make God out to be a monster.

Jesus himself rejects the argument that suffering is a punishment for sins. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus responds to the story of a stone tower that fell and crushed a crowd of people: “Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you”

(Luke 13:4). And we hear time and again in the Gospels that Jesus will have no part in this simplistic cause-and-effect theology, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned... He was born blind in order to reveal the glory of God.”

Something so powerful—so powerful that it is beyond anyone’s comprehension—has happened to a man blind from birth. He doesn’t have a clue about how he received his sight, or what he did to get chosen for it, or who it was that smeared mud on his eyes. None of this really matters to the man; all that matters is that “I once was blind, but now I see.”

But now everybody else is asking questions, “How can a man [Jesus] who is a sinner perform such signs?” “This man [Jesus] cannot be from God because he doesn’t observe the Sabbath.”

The poor beggar is assaulted by questions from every side, “How were your eyes opened?” “Where’s the man who did it?” “How could he do such a thing?” “What did he do to you?” “How did he open your eyes?” “What have you to say about him?”

Maybe you’ve noticed that not one living soul—not even the man’s parents—said an “Alleluia!” or an “Amen” or a “Praise be to God.” Nor did anyone ask the man what it was like for him to see for the first time in his life. All we hear is blanket skepticism and implied accusations.

While everybody else is so concerned about whether this healing is right or wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral, sinful or not—the man who has received his sight couldn’t care less about right or wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral, sinful or not. The categories that concern the man are blind and not blind, seeing and not seeing. So what if his interrogators want to insist that *blind is right and seeing is wrong*. The man will gladly accept being wrong because *he would rather see and be wrong than to be blind and be right*. Right and wrong have little to do with seeing and not seeing. Sometimes we need to see beyond right and wrong in order that we might see the glory of God.

Note that the blind man comes a long way in a very short time. At first his answers are timid, fearful, one-liners: “I’m the man.” “I don’t know.” “He put mud on my eyes. I washed, and now I see.” But as the questions go on and on until Mom and Dad even go quietly, meekly off stage, the man grows in his eloquence, confidence and courage until he finally sasses so sharply at the big bosses that they threw him out of the congregation.

Hear this from a poor, blind beggar who now sees: “Here is an astonishing thing!” he lectures the experts, “You don’t know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

Here, a nobody from nowhere, a man who was blind and begging until about thirty minutes ago, has just told the authorities that they can “go chase themselves”—that they couldn’t see God if God was standing directly in front of them.

At the beginning of the story the blind man called Jesus “a man,” then he calls him “a prophet,” then “a man from God.” It seems that his vision just keeps getting better and better until he sees more and more clearly who it is who has given him his sight. Finally, the man gets the right name and confesses in an act of worship, “Lord, I believe.” But the others, who claim to see so clearly, actually see less and less, until they say, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.”

Some people think that they can see so much better than anybody else can see, and they don’t mind telling you that you don’t see as clearly as they do and that what you are seeing is wrong. I don’t suppose we do this to be mean. Maybe we do this because we want to love God and we also want to love you. Maybe we are doing this to protect you from believing and doing the wrong things.

The Pharisees have a reputation in the New Testament for being so sure of everything—sure that God would not spit in the dirt and make Play Doe on the Sabbath; sure that Moses was God’s only teacher; sure that anyone born blind must be a sinner; sure that anyone who broke any of the 39 Sabbath laws was wrong; sure that God could not *work through sinners*; and sure that God did not *work on sinners*; and sure that nobody else had anything to teach them.

Meanwhile, the man born blind, who was not sure about anything, becomes the one who gradually “saw the light.” The one and only thing that he absolutely was sure about was that he could see. If that made Jesus wrong, then he hoped that he could also be wrong.

Like the man born blind—maybe like the suffering, righteous man Job (see Job 38:1ff)—James Martin suggests, “In the end, the most honest answer to the question of why the Covid-19 virus is killing thousands of people, why infectious diseases ravage humanity and why there is suffering at all is: We don’t know.”

“In these frightening times,” Martin writes, “Christians may find comfort in knowing that when they pray to Jesus, they are praying to someone who understands them not only because he is divine and knows all things, but because he is human and experienced all things... For Jesus, the sick or dying person was not the ‘other,’ not one to be blamed, but our brother and sister. When Jesus saw a person in need, the Gospels tell us that his heart was ‘moved with pity.’ He is a model for how we are to care during this crisis: with hearts moved by pity” (<https://nyti.ms/2wrFq5O>).

Thanks be to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits Thou hast given me, for all the pains and insults Thou hast borne for me. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I see Thee more clearly, love Thee more dearly, and follow Thee more nearly, day by day. Amen.

—djl

From the Parish Register

Burial:

Betty Kany, 91 years old, mother of Dr. Robert Kany and Liz and husband Mark Rouck, passed from this life on March 8th and was buried from Sts. Peter and Paul on March 13th. Interment was at Woodlawn Cemetery in Forest Park.



Gratitude for Mardi Gras and Talent Night

Thank you to everyone who helped with planning and hosting the Mardi Gras and Talent Night on Saturday, February 22nd. Many thanks to those who coordinated the show, offered food, worked in the kitchen, tended to the beverages, and provided clean-up afterwards. It was truly a group effort. The talented individuals and groups who provided the entertainment were enjoyed by those in attendance. Thank you for helping us to help others. The proceeds from the evening were approximately \$1,500.00.



The Friberg Update from our ELCA Missionaries in Tanzania

February 2020

*Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!*
(Psalm 107:1)

Maasai are very deliberate about greetings, farewells, and expressing thanks when they visit our clinics. Some go further and give us God's blessing. Others send a liter of milk or yogurt or a grilled leg of goat to convey their thanks for medical care. Kulunju came to me with a fist-sized keloid mass at the angle of his jaw which kept getting larger. He had to wear a hoodie so people would not stare at him. After excising the mass and closing the wound, I transported him 6 hours to Kenya the next day for radiation treatment to prevent a recurrence of the keloid.



Kulunju was so thankful to be free of an ugly mass of 15 years duration that he insisted I come with my family to receive a goat and meal from his extended family. Last month we visited his community and met his parents and his wife. Expressing their faith in Jesus comes naturally to them. It was obvious that their gracious hospitality was an expression of the family's thanks to God for his healing in Kulunju's life. When we left, Kulunju's parting blessing was, "Enturubare Enkai." Go with God.

God intends that we go through life being filled with gratitude for all of God's abundant blessings. Jesus gave thanks at every meal. Being thankful fills all aspects of our lives with contentment, joy, and meaning. It helps to overcome loneliness and depression. A huge irony we experience in Tanzania is that often the people who have very little are also the most thankful and generous.



With thanks for each one of you,
Steve and Bethany Friberg


Spring

News from the Riverside Preschool at Sts. Peter and Paul

Dear Friends,

Happy Easter! We will be "springing" into April with crafts, songs and activities about Easter, spring and pets with a visit from the Humane Society talking about pet safety.

—Lisa Manganiello, Preschool Director



**Coffee Hour Hosts
are Welcome!**



A sign-up page continues to be available at the kitchen serving counter of the dining hall for hosting Sunday morning coffee hours. Hands-on orientation for hosting these events will be provided by Janet Broussard or Sue Skudrna. Please speak with either one for further information.



Memorial Flowers

March 8th: In memory of +Martin Selecky+ on the anniversary of his birth on March 6th and in memory of parents +Mary+ and +Martin Selecky+ and sister +Anna Dzurja+.

March 15th: In memory of +Frederick Tornil+ on the first anniversary of his memorial service on March 13th by remembering wife Rose and sons Martin and Dan.

In celebration and gratitude for the 88th birthday of Rose Tornil.

In memory of loving father and grandfather +Joseph Vandlik+ on the 106th anniversary of his birth on March 19th by remembering children Mary Jo Meyers and Mark Vandlik and their families.



Easter Lilies will be available for \$17.00 for those who wish to place a lily in the chancel for the upcoming Easter celebrations. To order, please sign-up on the sheet posted in the dining hall or call the church office. The final day for ordering is Friday, April 3rd. Please make your checks payable to Sts. Peter and Paul Lutheran Church.

For more information, news, photos, videos
and sermons, visit us on the web at

our new site:

www.stspeterandpaulriverside.org

Birthdays

Apr. 1: Betty Mocek	Apr. 15: Susan Jones
Apr. 3: Betty Licko-Keel Michelle Ruska	Apr. 19: Dorothy Myers
Apr. 4: Anne Marie D'Alexander John McShane	Apr. 20: Anna Bulir
Apr. 6: Krystina Gomez Kathi Zinsser	Apr. 21: Anne Otjepka Gregg Valek
Apr. 7: Benjamin Myers	Apr. 22: Hannah Boike
Apr. 9: Rafael Martinez	Apr. 24: Paul Watkiss
Apr. 11: Arnost Bulir Joshua Czerak Diane Ritacco	Apr. 26: Susan Gillund Carol Triska
Apr. 13: Robert Kavicky	Apr. 27: John Hassel
	Apr. 29: Arden Kurhayez Courtney Kurhayez Laura Teter

Anniversaries

April 9, 1982: Joseph and Carol Ruiz
April 9, 1988: Kelly and Susan Jones
April 23, 1949: Steve and Beverly Podzamsky

Happenings

Congregation Council Meeting
Thursday, April 16th, 7:30 p.m.

Riverside Strings Spring Recital
Sunday, April 26, 2 p.m.

Overeaters Anonymous meets weekly on
Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m.

Co-Dependents Anonymous meets weekly on
Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m.

AA Big Book Study Group meets weekly on
Saturday mornings at 11 a.m.

AA Group meets weekly on
Saturday evenings at 7 p.m.

"Legends of the Game" Volleyball meets every
Monday, 6:30-9:45 p.m. through April 27th.



Installation of Congregation Council, Sunday, March 15th. From left to right in foreground: Linda McShane, Fred Kuzel, Carrie Watkiss (behind Fred), Brandon Michaels, Charles Matthies, John Broussard, Beverly Tarbox and Kathy Ganschow. Not pictured: Bill Boor and Juanita Jakubec.

Counting Our Blessings

by Ruth Boven

He remembered us in our low estate... His love endures forever (Psalm 136:23).

"Count your blessings, name them one by one..." These words are part of an old hymn Christians have sung for more than 100 years, and the message is still important today. Central to the pilgrim journey we travel is taking stock of the gifts God has given us.

Psalm 136 has reminded people of this fact for well over 2,000 years, and it urges us to remember God's goodness in community. In this psalm we can see a clear call-and-response format. As God's people sang this psalm together, a worship leader would sing the first phrase, and the people would respond with the refrain "His love endures forever." Again and again they would recount what God had done for them—from freeing them, to feeding them, to remembering them. And as they counted their blessings, they would say, "His love endures forever."

Sometimes while worshiping with God's people, I notice echoes of this psalm's graceful rhythms. The wonders of God's grace and forgiveness are declared, and the people sing a hymn of thanksgiving. The good news that Jesus saves and that God's Spirit is at work among us is preached, and the people commit themselves to grateful service. At the end of the worship time, God's promise of blessing is spoken over his people, and they receive it joyfully with an "Amen."

With whom will you join to count your blessings today?

—submitted by Charles Matthies

From the Stewardship Committee: Offerings During Closure

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you must know by now, in-person church services have been suspended for a while. For those of us who rely on putting our tithe into the offering plates on Sundays and Wednesdays the Stewardship Committee would like to suggest that you mail your contribution to the church office.

Karen and the other church staff will continue to be working during this hiatus and can get your checks to the right place. Continuous financial support of the church is critical as bills, salaries, and other expenses need to be met regardless of the current situation. If you donate cash, we do not recommend that you mail it. Rather, either use a check instead, or feel free to come by the church and drop off your contribution.

Large gatherings are discouraged but meeting with the pastor or visiting the church individually is easily arranged.

Thank you for remembering the church at this time. Please continue to pray for all of our members, especially those most vulnerable to this virus.

—Members of the Stewardship Committee



Memorials and Honorariums

✧ For the Church ✧

Anne Gavac, in memory of brothers +John Hluchy+ and +Samuel Hluchy+.
Anne Gavac and family, in memory of parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents +Paul+ and +Zuzanna Hluchy+.
Anita Horak, in memory of +Nick Sasuta+.
Anita Horak, in memory of +Jerry Gaydusek+.

✧ In Memory of Lawrence Bakalich ✧

Frank and Ann Kmet
Tom and Vicki Michaels
John and Janet Broussard
John and Shirley Kostelny
Mildred Mendel
Steve and Beverly Podzamsky
Robert and Suzanna Skudrna
Vera Borysek
Edward and Joanne Sefara
Carole Pollitz
Anita Horak

✧ In Memory of Jan A. Hapgood to Special Appeal ✧

Janice B. Hapgood, Jon A. Hapgood, Laura H. and Christopher Teter, in memory of dear husband and father.
Scott Boor, Katie Boor Waters and family, and Jane Boor, in memory of uncle and brother-in-law.
Robert and Suzanna Skudrna
Charles Matthies
Susan Quante
Susan E. Loggans
Richard and Deborah Boor
Mr. and Mrs. Andre Gargano
Helen Gaydusek
Karole Gaydusek and Phil Arynone
Jim and Sandy Gaydusek
Thomas and Carol Lassiter
Adolf and Ellen Heimann
Betty Kany
Mark and Liz Rouck
John and Janet Broussard
Lois A. Michaels
Edward and Joanne Sefara
Anita Horak
Lois Mika

Centering Prayer: The Method

by Cynthia Bourgeault

For nearly thirty years now, the following four guidelines have successfully introduced tens of thousands of people worldwide to Centering Prayer: 1) Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within. 2) Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within. 3) When engaged with your thoughts (including body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections), return ever so gently to the sacred word. 3) At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes. Father Thomas Keating suggests praying for twenty minutes twice a day.

So are we really saying that in Centering Prayer you meditate by simply letting go of one thought after another? That can certainly be our subjective experience of the practice, and this is exactly the frustration expressed by an early practitioner. In one of the very earliest training workshops led by Keating himself, a nun tried out her first twenty-minute taste of Centering Prayer and then lamented, "Oh, Father Thomas, I'm such a failure at this prayer. In twenty minutes I've had ten thousand thoughts!"

"How lovely," responded Keating, without missing a beat. "Ten thousand opportunities to return to God."

This simple story captures the essence of Centering Prayer. It is quintessentially a pathway of return in which every time the mind is released from engagement with a specific idea or impression, we move from a smaller and more constricted consciousness into that open, diffuse awareness in which our presence to divine reality makes itself known along a whole different pathway of perception.

That's what the anonymous author of the fourteenth century spiritual classic *The Cloud of Unknowing* may have had in mind when he wrote, "God can be held fast and loved by means of love, but by thought never." "Love" is this author's pet word for that open, diffuse awareness which gradually allows another and deeper way of knowing to pervade one's entire being.

Out of my own three decades of experience in Centering Prayer, I believe that this "love" indeed has nothing to do with emotions or feelings in the usual sense of the word. It is rather the author's nearest equivalent term to describe what we would nowadays call non-dual perception anchored in the heart.

And he is indeed correct in calling it "love" because the energetic bandwidth in which the heart works is intimacy, the capacity to perceive things from the inside by coming into sympathetic resonance with them. Imagine! Centuries ahead of his time, the author is groping for metaphors to describe an entirely different mode of perceptivity.

Sign up for
Softball



If you are a male thirteen years of age and older and interested in playing softball for Sts. Peter and Paul during the 2020 season please contact Tom Michaels at (708) 354-5076.



February 2020

Current, Benevolence and Freewill Offering

Budgeted Offering: \$2,597.00

Date	Offering
2/2	\$1,408.00
2/9	\$1,633.00
2/16	\$1,883.00
2/23	\$1,966.00



A Well Story

*A sermon for the Third Sunday in the Lent
Romans 5:1-11 and John 4:5-42*

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. . . but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

What happens this morning at Jacob's well is just one of several "well stories" from the Bible that eventually turn into "love stories" from the Bible. Maybe you remember some of these "well stories" turned "love stories."

In Exodus 2, a Hebrew boy, on the run from an Egyptian Pharaoh, meets an exotic girl at a well in Midian just east of Egypt. Remember, Moses met Zipporah while she and her sisters were getting water for their father's flock. When some young shepherds came and chased the girls away, Moses, like a real gentleman, came to the rescue and even watered his future father-in-law's sheep for the seven lovely sisters. When the girls' father heard about the Egyptian hero, he decided to give one of his daughters to Moses in marriage. A Jewish boy meet an exotic girl, and a love story is sure to follow.

Something similar happens much earlier in Genesis 29 when Jacob, fleeing for *his* life, stops at a well in the country of his ancestors, "the people of the east," and, at "high day," meets his future wife, Rachel, while she is watering *her* father's sheep. See, a Jewish boy meets a not-so-exotic girl at a well, and a love story is sure to follow.

What happens this morning at Jacob's well between Jesus and the Samaritan woman all begins in Genesis 24 when Abraham sends a servant off to the old country to find a wife for Isaac. The servant comes to a well in the city of Nahor where he meets Rebecca, future wife of Isaac, who just happens to be his second cousin.

In the "well-story-turned-love-story" which we have before us this morning, the Jewish rabbi Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at the well where "Jacob kissed Rachel, and wept aloud." But, of course, we all know that there can be no romance going on at this well, that there will be no "love story" this time around in this "well story." Well, maybe we'd better take a closer look. After all, this is the longest recorded conversation that Jesus has with anyone anywhere. He talks longer with this woman than he does with any one of his disciples, any one of his accusers, even any one of his own family.

You may also have noticed some peculiarities about this very long conversation. Number one, Jesus is alone at the well. You would expect that at least one of the disciples would have stayed to keep him company; but no, all twelve of them need to traipse off to buy lunch.

Number two, we read that Jesus conveniently forgot his little leather bucket and rope which any sensible traveler in that part of the world would have used to draw water from a well. So, if Jesus is going to get a drink, he will have to depend on someone else to give it to him. You see how the story is getting set-up.

Number three, and perhaps most peculiar, is that Rabbi Jesus initiates a conversation with a woman, and not just any woman, but a Samaritan woman, something truly scandalous and taboo at the time. In Jesus' day, women were not even allowed to worship with men, whose morning devotions included the prayer, "Thank God that I am not a woman." Women were not to be seen or heard in public, especially not by holy men who refused to speak even to their own wives in public. In fact, one pious group of men was known as "the bruised and bleeding Pharisees" because they closed their eyes when they saw a woman coming down the street, even if it meant banging into a wall and bloodying their noses. But, not only is she a she, the woman at the well is also a Samaritan which, as far as the Judeans were concerned, made her a full-pagan. To make matters even worse, not only is she a she and a Samaritan, she is also a woman "with a

past" as we used to say. Women came to the well in the mornings and the evenings while it was still cool when they could greet each other and talk about the daily news, no doubt, including the latest escapades of this woman. The fact that she comes to the well at noon was a sure sign that the woman was probably not welcome at their morning meetings.

The woman must have been very surprised when she comes in the heat of the day and sees a strange man sitting alone beside the well with no water pouch. She sees his olive skin, his dark eyes, his strong nose; and she perceives that he is no Samaritan but a Judean. And we figure this has to be *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* all over again. Utterly taboo. Socially unacceptable. Downright scandalous.

"How dare you, a Judean, ask me, a Samaritan woman for a drink?" And just to make sure that we get the point, the narrator of John says that Judeans and Samaritans have a past about as shameful and painful as black and white in America. Judeans and Samaritans have a shared history, a shared ancestry, a shared religion, and yet so many centuries of bad blood between them that they can't even go to church together.

So, the stage is set for scandal and intrigue at Jacob's well. The Word that became flesh will go anywhere and cross every boundary to reveal itself. But, of course, we all know that there could be no romance going on at this well, that there could be no wedding in the making at this well. However, this is John's Gospel, and we remember that it all began with a wedding at Cana in Galilee, chapter 2, when water was changed to wine. After all, John the Baptist has just rung the wedding bells in chapter 3 when he calls himself the best man for the bridegroom who will soon appear.

This story, with its "living water," was likely used by the early church at baptisms. Here in Samaria, as at baptism, Jesus is crossing major barriers to reach this woman, which would suggest that in Holy Baptism there *is* a marriage taking place—a love story between Christ and his bride the Church—a marriage which eventually will include both Jews and Samaritans as well as Gentiles.

Martin Luther speaks of baptism as "a joyful exchange" between Christ and his bride the Church when he writes that "The third incomparable benefit of faith is that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, as the apostle teaches, Christ and the soul become one flesh [Ephesians 5:31-32]. And if they are one flesh and there is between them a true marriage... it follows that everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil. Accordingly, the believing soul can boast about and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were his own..."

"...The believing soul can... glory in whatever Christ has as though it were his own..."

The "well story" of Jesus and the Samaritan woman turns out to be a "love story" after all. For only one who loves you truly knows you as you are and not as you pretend to be. Only one who loves you knows your deepest desires. Only one who loves you can look at your past without batting an eye.

Curiously, in John's Gospel, the crucifixion happens at "high day," and once more Jesus asks for a drink. With this drink, given him on the cross, Jesus' marriage to humanity is complete.

For while we were still weak, Christ died with us in our wilderness, that we might be one with him and he with us, one flesh, joined in this life and whatever life might come after this, "for richer or poorer, for better or worse, in sickness and in health, so long as...," well, so long as he lives and reigns with the Father and Holy Spirit.—*djl*



APRIL WORSHIP SERVERS

(Tentatively Scheduled)

Palm Sunday, April 5th:

Greeters: Larry Crachy and Karen Kubik
Acolyte: Bryan Galdun
Crucifer: Matt Decosola
Assisting Minister: Vicki Michaels
Comm. Minister: Brandon Michaels
Lectors: Paul and Carrie Watkiss
Ushers: Rafael Martinez

Maundy Thursday, April 9th:

Greeters: Shirley Kostelny and Vicki Michaels
Acolyte: Aidan Altavilla
Assisting Minister: Charles Matthies
Lectors: Keith Altavilla and George Valek
Ushers: Gregg Valek and John Kostelny

Good Friday, April 10th

Acolyte: Abby Tarbox
Assisting Minister: Carrie Watkiss
Passion Readers: Joanne Sefara, John Broussard,
J. T. and Beverly Tarbox, Jane Lauritsen,
Kristine Boike, Tom and Vicki Michaels
Usher: Janet Broussard

Easter Sunday, April 12th:

Greeters: Martin and Ann Pennino
Acolyte: Sebastian Myers
Crucifer: Ben Myers
Assisting Minister: Tom Myers
Comm. Ministers: Charles Matthies, Vicki Michaels,
Beverly Tarbox, and Carrie Watkiss
Lectors: Robert Melnyk and Brandon Michaels
Ushers: Rafael Martinez and Walter Cudecki

April 19th:

Greeters: Sandy Garvey and Karyn Bute
Acolyte: Ben Myers
Assisting Minister: Tom Michaels
Comm. Minister: Paul Watkiss
Lectors: John and Shirley Kostelny
Ushers: Gregg Valek and John Kostelny

April 26th:

Greeters: Paul and Carrie Watkiss
Acolyte: Aidan Altavilla
Assisting Minister: John Broussard
Comm. Minister: Martin Pennino
Lectors: Charles Matthies and Joanne Sefara
Ushers: Janet Broussard and Rafael Martinez

Sacristan and Altar Care:

Edward and Joanne Sefara

We are in need of congregation members and friends to serve as acolytes and ushers. If interested, please speak with Pastor Dennis or a member of the Worship and Music Committee.

MAY WORSHIP SERVERS

(Tentatively Scheduled)

May 3rd:

Greeters: Edward and Joanne Sefara
Acolyte: Aidan Altavilla
Assisting Minister: Charles Matthies
Comm. Minister: Tom Myers
Lectors: Matt Decosola and Keith Altavilla
Ushers: Rafael Martinez and John Kostelny

May 10th:

Greeters: Walter and Judith Cudecki
Acolyte: Abby Tarbox
Assisting Minister: Vicki Michaels
Comm. Minister: Beverly Tarbox
Lectors: Jane Lauritsen and Kristine Boike
Ushers: Walter Cudecki and Rafael Martinez

May 17th:

Greeters: Larry Crachy and Karen Kubik
Acolyte: Ben Myers
Assisting Minister: Brandon Michaels
Comm. Minister: Tom Michaels
Lectors: Tom and Lavinia Myers
Ushers: Donald Haase and Johnathan Haase

May 24th:

Greeters: Charles Matthies and Fred Kuzel
Acolyte: Bryan Galdun
Assisting Minister: Carrie Watkiss
Comm. Minister: Paul Watkiss
Lectors: John Broussard and George Valek
Ushers: Gregg Valek and Janet Broussard

May 31st:

Greeters: Carole Pollitz and Carl Busch
Acolyte: Sebastian Myers
Assisting Minister: Tom Myers
Comm. Minister: Martin Pennino
Lectors: Robert Melnyk and Brandon Michaels
Ushers: Rafael Martinez and John Kostelny

Sacristan and Altar Care:
Carole Pollitz and Carl Busch

Worship Servers Please Note...

...that if you are unable to keep your scheduled date, please arrange for a replacement and call the church office with the change. Thank you.



DATED MATERIAL

Thresholds

by John O'Donohue

Within the grip of winter, it is almost impossible to imagine the spring. The gray perished landscape is shorn of color. Only bleakness meets the eye; everything seems severe and edged. Winter is the oldest season; it has some quality of the absolute. Yet beneath the surface of winter, the miracle of spring is already in preparation; the cold is relenting; seeds are waking up. Colors are beginning to imagine how they will return. Then, imperceptibly, somewhere one bud opens and the symphony of renewal is no longer reversible. From the black heart of winter a miraculous, breathing plenitude of color emerges.

The beauty of nature insists on taking its time. Everything is prepared. Nothing is rushed. The rhythm of emergence is a gradual slow beat always inching its way forward; change remains faithful to itself until the new unfolds in the full confidence of true arrival. Because nothing is abrupt, the beginning of spring nearly always catches us unawares. It is there before we see it; and then we can look nowhere without seeing it.

Change arrives in nature when time has ripened. There are no jagged transitions or crude discontinuities. This accounts for the sureness with which one season succeeds another. It is as though they were moving forward in a rhythm set from within a continuum.

To change is one of the great dreams of every heart—to change the limitations, the sameness, the banality, or the pain. So often we look back on patterns of behavior, the kind of decisions we make repeatedly and that have failed to serve us well, and we aim for a new and more successful path or way of living. But change is difficult for us. So often we opt to continue the old pattern, rather than risking the danger of difference. We are also often surprised by change that seems to arrive out of nowhere. We find ourselves crossing some new threshold we had never anticipated. Like spring secretly at work within the heart of winter, below the surface of our lives huge changes are in fermentation. We never suspect a thing. Then when the grip of some long-enduring winter mentality begins to loosen, we find ourselves vulnerable to a flourish of possibility and we are suddenly negotiating the challenge of a threshold.

At any time you can ask yourself: At which threshold am I now standing? At this time in my life, what am I leaving? Where am I about to enter? What is preventing me from crossing my next threshold? What gift would enable me to do it? A threshold is not a simple boundary; it is a frontier that divides two different territories, rhythms, and atmospheres. Indeed, it is a lovely testimony to the fullness and integrity of an experience or a stage of life that it intensifies toward the end into a real frontier that cannot be crossed without the heart being passionately engaged and woken up. At this threshold a great complexity of emotion comes alive: confusion, fear, excitement, sadness, hope. This is one of the reasons such vital

crossings were always clothed in ritual. It is wise in your own life to be able to recognize and acknowledge the key thresholds: to take your time; to feel all the varieties of presence that accrue there; to listen inward with complete attention until you hear the inner voice calling you forward. The time has come to cross.

To acknowledge and cross a new threshold is always a challenge. It demands courage and also a sense of trust in whatever is emerging. This becomes essential when a threshold opens suddenly in front of you, one for which you had no preparation. This could be illness, suffering, or loss. Because we are so engaged with the world, we usually forget how fragile life can be and how vulnerable we always are. It takes only a couple of seconds for a life to change irreversibly. Suddenly you stand on completely strange ground and a new course of life has to be embraced. Especially at such times we desperately need blessing and protection. You look back at the life you have lived up to a few hours before, and it suddenly seems so far away. Think for a moment how, across the world, someone's life has just changed—irrevocably, permanently, and not necessarily for the better—and everything that was once so steady, so reliable, must now find a new way of unfolding.

Though we know one another's names and recognize one another's faces, we never know what destiny shapes each life. The script of individual destiny is secret; it is hidden behind and beneath the sequence of happenings that is continually unfolding for us. Each life is a mystery that is never finally available to the mind's light or questions. That we are here is a huge affirmation; somehow life needed us and wanted us to be. To sense and trust this primeval acceptance can open a vast spring of trust within the heart. It can free us into a natural courage that casts out fear and opens up our lives to become voyages of discovery, creativity, and compassion. No threshold need be a threat, but rather an invitation and a promise. Whatever comes, the great sacrament of life will remain faithful to us, blessing us always with visible signs of invisible grace. We merely need to trust.

Excerpt from To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings by John O'Donohue, Irish teacher and poet who draws on Celtic spiritual traditions to create words of inspiration and wisdom for today.

