



February 22, 2026  
Bulletin #8

## *Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church*

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Monsignor Bakhos Chidiac, Pastor

Mary Lee Porter, Ed.D. Organist



### *Sunday of the Leper*

- \***Weekend Masses:** Saturdays: Mass at 4:00 p.m. and Sundays: Mass at 10:30 a.m.
  - \***Weekday Masses:** Tuesdays and Thursdays Mass at 12:00 Noon  
Mondays and Wednesdays and Fridays: No Mass. Pastor's office work.
  - \***Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament:** Every 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday and Sunday of the month after Mass.
  - \***Confession:** Saturday: 3:00 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. or any other time by appointment.
  - \***Baptism:** Please call the Pastor as soon as baby is born; at least one Godparent must be Catholic.
  - \***Weddings:** Please make arrangements at least six months in advance before any other plans are made.
  - \***Sick Calls & Anointing of the Sick:** Please notify the Pastor at 304-233-1688
  - \***Parish Council:** Lou Khourey, Susan (John) Burns, Mark McLaughlin, Liz Murad, Gary Weisner.
  - \***Choir Members:** Lou Khourey, Robert Harris, Joe Simon, Shelly Hancher, Holly Stahl.
  - \***Bulletin Coordinator:** Thomasina Geimer
  - \***Altar Servers:** Joe Roxby and Christopher AlKhouri
  - \***Cedar Club:** Linda Duffy, President
  - \***Women's Society:** Jeannette Wakim, President
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- \***Bulletin Announcements:**  
Submit all Bulletin Information to Msgr. Bakhos by Noon on Tuesday every week.
  - \***New Parishioners:**  
We welcome you with great joy & invite you to officially register as one of our parishioners.
  - \***Remember the Church in your Last Will & Testament:** Her prayers will accompany you to heaven.

## ***Gospel Reflection: Sunday of the Leper***

Readings: 2Kg 5:1-14; Rom 6:12-23 and Mk 1:35-45

Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease caused by the bacillus leproe, characterized by the formation of growths in the skin, mucous membranes, peripheral nerves, bones, and internal viscera, producing various deformities and mutilations of the human body, and usually terminating in death.

Lepers were subjected to most stringent regulations. They were excluded from the church by a funeral Mass and a symbolic burial. In every important community asylums were erected for the unfortunate victims. Lepers had to wear a special garb, and carry "a wooden clapper to give warning of their approach. They were forbidden to enter inns, churches, mills, or bake houses, to touch healthy persons or eat with them, to wash in the streams, or to walk in narrow footpaths".

Owing to strict legislation, leprosy gradually disappeared, so that at the close of the seventeenth century it had become rare except in some few localities.

In the United States, the majority of cases occur in Louisiana and California, while from many other States cases are occasionally reported, notably from New York, Ohio Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Missouri, the Carolinas and Texas. In Louisiana leprosy has been gaining foothold since 1758, when the Acadians introduced it.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and according to the statistics furnished by delegates to the second international conference on leprosy, there were approximately 200,000 cases of the disease throughout the world: India, it is stated, coming first with 97,340 cases; the United States contributing 146 cases, and the Panama Canal Zone the minimum of 7 cases.

The average course of leprosy is about eight years and death is the ordinary conclusion of every case, which may come from the exhaustive effects of the disease.

So far leprosy has baffled all the efforts of medical science ... it being admitted that the disease is both contagious and preventable, there seems to be no doubt that means of public protection should be provided... Of all the states of the Union, Louisiana supports the leper-home at Carville where some seventy patients are housed under the care of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

***The global prevalence of the disease has fallen by 90% since 1985 with over 12 million patients cured worldwide since that date. Moreover, the gross disabilities which were such a feature of the disease for millennia, are now becoming a thing of the past, with early detection and treatment. Leprosaria and the physical separation of patients from their families are completely unnecessary.***

## ***Meditation for Lent: Ask, Seek, Knock***

Ask, Seek, Knock!!!

Jesus said to his disciples: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (Matt 7:7)

Reflection: In 1942, Warner Sallman painted the scene of Jesus knocking at the door, a door that had no outside handle. If the door were to be opened, it had to be opened from the inside. The painting was a rendition of Revelation 3:20, a verse in which the Lord is seeking entrance into our lives. A great Lenten question: will we allow Jesus to come into our souls and dine with us?

When Jesus tells the disciples to ask, to seek, and to knock, we must realize that Jesus is always the one to take the initiative. He first knocks at the door of our life before we knock on the door of heaven; he seeks out the lost sheep long before the flock seeks the Good Shepherd; he asks us to share our gifts with others before we ask him for renewed grace. Again, we are to emulate the God in whose image and likeness we are made.

So, what will you ask for this Lent? Better health? A deeper prayer life? The healing of relationships? Greater wisdom and compassion? The gift of tears, tears of repentance? A world of justice and peace? These are noble requests. Yet, too often we ask for greater personal recognition, more possessions or control, an increase in comfort and security. We are co-opted by our culture and it is only through the grace of the Holy Spirit that we request what is best for others and for ourselves.

So, what do you seek? The widow sought her lost coin; the shepherd, his lost sheep; the father, his prodigal son. We are all searchers and everyone seeks some form of meaning to life. Most people seek

integration in a broken world. Many are looking for depth in a world of superficiality. Such goals are noble. Yet, we can also chase after rainbows and waste our time looking for that nonexistent pot of gold.

So, where do you go to find the Lord? In what sacred geography does God dwell? All we have to do is turn toward the mystery of creation and there, in the starry, starry night, in the flight of the eagle, in the beauty of the ocean and mountain, we are immersed in the "divine milieu." And we can be assured that if we knock, the Lord will open.

Meditation: What does your heart seek? In what ways does God take the initiative in your life? Have you opened the door to our "pilgrim" God?

Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit, teach us your ways. Give us the wisdom to ask and to seek and to knock in all the proper places. Prevent us from wasting our time and energy on things that do not matter. Instruct us in your ways, the ways of love, peace, and joy.

## ***Eparchy Regulations for Lent***

Then to all Christ said, "Whoever wishes to be my follower, must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps" (LK 9:23).

The Church has always helped us fulfill these words of Jesus by prescribing very definite penance for all Catholics. Accordingly, the Pope, the Patriarch and the American bishops have outlined obligatory fasting and abstinence. Our Eparchial Regulations are:

1-Great Friday (April 3, 2026) is a day of abstinence for all Catholics over the age of 14. On this day, fasting as well as abstinence is also obligatory for those from the age of 18 through 59. Abstinence means abstinence from meat and meat products. Fasting means no food from midnight to noon, except for plain water. No Catholic will likely excuse himself or herself from this obligation.

2-All other Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence from meat (and meat products) for everyone 14 years of age and older. Here again, Catholics will not hold themselves lightly excused.

3-If there is a serious health problem, the obligation of fasting and abstinence would not apply.

4-Fasting from midnight to noon daily is optional.

5-We strive to make all days of Lent a time of prayer, penance, and charitable assistance toward the less fortunate and needy.

## ***Diocesan Lenten Appeal***

The Lenten Appeal for the Eparchy (Diocese) of Our Lady of Lebanon is currently underway. A letter from Bishop A. Elias Zaidan regarding the Appeal will be sent to every family, and copies are also accessible online at [www.eparchy.org](http://www.eparchy.org). The Eparchy counts on your support to uphold our Maronite parishes, to train our future Maronite priests, and to continue charitable efforts at home and abroad. We encourage every family to take part in the Appeal and to give generously. Also you received letter from our church for the same Appeal. Donations can be made to our church or to the Eparchy (Diocese). Please consider supporting your Eparchy. Thank you!

**Many Thanks for those who fulfilled their 2026 Diocesan Appeal:**

Msgr Bakhos Chidiac, Assad Rahi,

## ***Mass Schedule, this Weekend: Sat.-Sunday, Feb.21-22***

### **Saturday, February 21, Mass at 4:00 p.m.:**

✠ Robert Rose and Dave Sengewalt by the Family

✠ Fred Hikel (Anniversary) by Mary Beth Weisner

✠ Noel Foreman by his wife Anne & Family

### **Sunday, February 22, Mass at 10:30 a.m.:**

✠ Sally Simon-Wodusky (Anniversary) by her son Rob Wodusky

✠ Edward & Gerard Joseph & Mickey McLaughlin by Larry & Becky Ferrera

## ***Next Weekdays Mass Schedule***

**Monday, February 23:** No Mass. Pastor's day off.

**Tuesday, February 24, Mass at Noon:**

- ✠ Sylvia Long, her husband Arthur, and her son Mark by her last will
- ✠ Janis & George Thomas (Ohio) by their last will
- ✠ Rosella Saseen, parents Nancepe & Helen, grandparents Shikrey & Helen Saseen by her last Will

**Wednesday, February 25: No Mass.****Thursday, February 26, Mass at noon:**

- ✠ Judith Wolfe (Anniversary) by Libby G. Magnone
- ✠ Tom Quinn by his Family
- ✠ Noel Foreman by his wife Anne & Family

**Friday, February 27, Mass at 5:30 followed by Stations of the Cross**

- ✠ Tom Quinn by his Family
- ✠ Noel Foreman by his wife Anne & Family
- ✠ Fran Saseen by Lou & Charlotte Khourey and Family

***Mass Schedule, next Weekend: Sat. 28 and Sunday 1*****Saturday, February 28, Mass at 4:00 p.m.:**

- ✠ Tom Quinn by his Family
- ✠ Fran Saseen by Carol Dougherty
- ✠ Noel Foreman by his wife Anne & Family

**Sunday, March 1, Mass at 10:30 a.m.:**

- ✠ Lawrence Ferrera (Anniversary) by Larry & Becky Ferrera
- ✠ Cecilia John by Ron & Susan (John) Burns
- ✠ Bill Dougherty (Anniversary) by his wife Carol (OK)

***Coming Events in a glimpse***

March 29	Palm Sunday
April 5	Easter Sunday
Sunday ?????	First Communion celebration. See below
May 11-16	Spring Bake Sale Monday, May 11: Onion Prep Tuesday, May 12: Prep meat, roll kibbee balls Wednesday, May 13: Bake kibbee Thursday, May 14: Bake meat pies Saturday, May 16: Pick up orders
Sunday, August 9	Mahrajan (Lebanese Festival)

***Weekdays Mass in the Cedar Hall (starting Tuesday, Feb. 24)***

Dear parishioners, we are fixing the crack in the ceiling of the choir loft. The company is working now and is making noise. The daily Masses will be celebrated inside the Cedar Hall starting Tuesday, February 24 until the work is done and the scaffolding removed. Weekend Masses and the Stations of the Cross will take place inside the church as usual. Thanks for your cooperation. –Msgr. Bakhos

***First Communion Celebration (Sunday ?????)***

Dear Parishioners,

Msgr Bakhos and the parents of the three candidates for First Communion (Eloise Chapman, Miriam Sable and Blaze Smay) cordially invite you to the celebration of the First Communion. It will take place on a Sunday in April when the program is complete. You will be informed about the day and time later on. A brunch will be served to all parishioners after Mass. A special table decorated in white will be set in the middle of the Hall for the candidates. Please let the candidates feel “special” by bringing to everyone of them a small gift. They will appreciate you welcoming them to the community. –Msgr. Bakhos



## ***Easter Lillies Donated in Memory of:***

Please donate \$25.00 to sponsor a lilly or a hyacinth toward decoration the Tomb of Christ and the altar of the church at Easter. The following generous parishioners donated Easter Flowers In Loving Memory of:

- ✦ Gladys Howard & Louise N. & Louis H. Khourey, Sr. by Lou & Charlotte Khourey & Family
- ✦ Tom & Mary K. Ferris by their daughter Denise Ferris
- ✦ Adib & Sadie (parents), Nadim (brother), Mona (sister) by Msgr. Bakhos Chidiac
- ✦ Pearl Shutler by her daughter Janet Shutler
- ✦ Opal Ritts by her husband John
- ✦ John T. & Cecilia John by Ron & Susan Burns
- ✦ Philip Geimer & all the Deceased Family members of Thomasina Geimer
- ✦ Rick Frazier by his wife Luane Frazier
- ✦ Mary Stees by Jay & liz Murad
- ✦ in honor of Dennis & Mary Lee Porter
- ✦ In honor of Chris & Jeannette Wakim & Family
- ✦ In honor of Anthony & Amanda Sable and Family
- ✦ In honor of Frank & Anna Marie Duymich
- ✦ In honor of Michael Duymich
- ✦ In honor of Larry & Lillian Siebieda
- ✦ In honor of Dr. Nabel & Nisrine Alkhouri & Family
- ✦ In honor of Veronica Mushet
- ✦ In Honor of Janet Shutler
- ✦ In honor of Alicia Peklinsky and Family

## ***Lebanese Festival News (Sunday, August 9 from 11 to 6 pm)***

### **--Volunteers:**

--If you are able to volunteer 2 hours at the festival, please call Msgr Bakhos at 304-233-1688. Thanks

### **--Inflatable Booth:**

--Many Thanks to Tracy Shia and Molly Powell for accepting the responsibility to be the chairpersons of the Inflatables.

### **--Diamond Sponsors:**

If you are blessed and able to sponsor one of the four inflatables for the children to play, your name will be published in the Ad Book on the Diamond Level. With your generosity, children can play all day long for \$5.00 instead of \$50.00 if we hire an inflatable company. Let us make everyone happy. Donation is \$450.00

--1<sup>st</sup> Diamond Sponsor: Rob Wodusky sponsored the first inflatable. Many Thanks and May God bless you.

--2<sup>nd</sup> Diamond Sponsors: Ron & Susan Burns sponsored the 2<sup>nd</sup> inflatable. Many Thanks and May God bless you.

--3<sup>rd</sup> Diamond Sponsor: ??????????

--4<sup>th</sup> Diamond Sponsor: ??????????????????

### **--No Canope or Pop-ups at the Festival:**

The Festival committee decided not to allow anyone to bring his/her own canope or pop-up tent to the festival ground -that is rented by the church- for insurance and safety reasons. The committee will ask the owners to remove their pop-up immediately.

## ***Rummage Sale Items Drop off (all Year Long)***

Please bring with you to the church all the items you wish to donate toward the Rummage Sale. Items are accepted all year long. The Cedar Club and the Women Society raise funds to cover the Building Insurance of our church which exceeds \$22,000. Any donation is accepted and helpful. We will open the basement door for you anytime. Please call 304-233-1688

## ***Birthdays Wishes in the Coming Month***

February 24: Mary Lee Porter  
 February 27: MaryAnn Carl  
 March 2: Ava Murad  
 March 4: Jeff Sengewalt  
 March 6: Kristen Graney  
 March 15: Shelby Imer  
 March 16: Mia Ferrera  
 March 18: Kenny Imer, Bill Stees, Patrick Petros  
 March 21: Caroline Stees McDowell  
 March 22: Jennifer Imer

## ***Stations of the Cross (Fridays during Lent)***

Every Friday during Lent, we celebrate the Mass at 5:30 p.m. It will be followed by the Stations of the Cross and Benediction of the Cross. The "Stations of the Cross" is a devotion which consists of following the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ by recalling the fourteen prominent events that took place from the time of the trial under Pontius Pilate until His death and burial on Mount Calvary. Many Thanks to these generous families who sponsored light Lenten meal dinners for social hour after the Stations of the Cross. If any other family wants to participate in the meal for social hour, please ask and join the families listed below.

Date:	Volunteers Who are sponsoring the Light Meals on Fridays during Lent:
2 <sup>nd</sup> Friday, February 27	Meal Sponsors: Liz & Jay Murad ✓
3 <sup>rd</sup> Friday, March 6	Meal Sponsors: George & Susan Saseen & the Frenn Family ✓
4 <sup>th</sup> Friday, March 13	Meal Sponsors: Susan & Ron Burns and Pat Stees & Libby Magnone ✓
5 <sup>th</sup> Friday, March 20	Meal Sponsors: Ron & Kim Gibbons and Msgr Bakhos ✓
6 <sup>th</sup> Friday, March 27	Meal Sponsors: Dr. Nabil & Nisrine Alkhouri ✓
Good Friday, April 3	Meal Sponsors: The Cedar Club & Parishioners
Easter Sunday, April 5	Happy Easter

## ***Please Pray for Those on Our Prayer List***

(Note: Please call Msgr. Bakhos if you need your name added to our Prayer List. HIPPA regulations)

Lisa Kennedy (daughter of Carol Dougherty, OK), Joe Popovich, Earl & Linda Duffy, Nini Miller, Julia Schiess (daughter of Leo Bleifus), Mary Ragase, Mary Zigler (sister of Lillian Siebieda), Dolores Oser, Anthony Wakim, Sandra DeMuth, Justin Frenn, Elia Frenn, Patty Fahey, Fred Schweizer (brother of our organist Mary Lee Porter), Denny Albaugh, Rita Rae Sage, John Frazier. (son of Luane Frazier),

<b><i>Your Church Support Last Week</i></b>	
\$1,224.00	Sunday Collection
24.00	Candles
31.00	Coffee hour
71.00	Mercy Meal
450.00	Donation to the Mahrajan by Rob Wodusky. Many Thanks
\$1,800.00	Total Deposits: May God reward you abundantly for supporting your spiritual home! Finance Committee: Lou Khourey, Susan Burns, Liz Murad, Mark McLaughlin

## ***Around Us***

### ***Condolences: Barb Pack***

The pastor and the parishioners of Our Lady of Lebanon Church, Wheeling, offer their heartfelt sympathy to the Pack Family on the loss of their beloved **Barb**. She was the wife of George Pack who is the brother of our parishioners Tim Pack and Janet Jaquay. Msgr. Bakhos celebrated the Funeral Mass at Our Lady of Lebanon Church on **Tuesday, February 17**. The choir of the church served the funeral Mass and the Women's Society served the Mercy Meal at the Cedar Hall after the interment. May the Almighty God grant repose of the soul to His handmaid and we extend the parish's condolences to her Family in their time of sorrow.

## ***Trip to France (May 19-28)***

Join Bishop Elias Zaidan to Lourdes and other important sites in France including Paris, Lisieux, Saint Michael, Normandie, and Bordeaux.

Double occupancy: \$4,000 per person.

Contact: Ivette Jackson at 323-336-3168

Jamileh Koury at 818-294-2901. or email [info@eparchy.org](mailto:info@eparchy.org).

## ***Question & Answer (#56)***

Question #56: "What commitments does one need to make when he becomes a Catholic?"

Answer: You need to strive to know, love and serve God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. You commit to being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Since Christ continues to act in the world through the Church with which He is one body. Catholics believe complete discipleship involves adhering to Christ's Word as presented in the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Adhering to the teaching of the Church means assenting to what the Magisterium (the pope and the bishops united with him) teaches as true concerning faith and morals and, by God's grace, living accordingly. Of the Magisterium, Christ said, "Whoever listens to you, listens to Me. Whoever rejects you, rejects Me. And whoever rejects Me, rejects the One who sent Me." (Luke 10:16) When the Magisterium teaches, it is Christ teaching.

Receiving Christ's grace through the Sacraments includes accepting Baptism and the Sacraments of initiation (Confirmation, Holy Eucharist), healing (Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick) and those related to vocation (Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders). The Sacraments are visible, effective signs of Christ's invisible action.

Finally, Christ exercises His pastoral and kingly authority over His followers through the pastors of His Church. Obeying their lawful authority is a way of obeying Christ. Following the pastors includes observing the precepts of the Church. These are commitments to

- (1) attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days,
- (2) confess one's sins at least once a year (if one is conscious of mortal sin);
- (3) receive Holy Communion during Easter time;
- (4) observe appointed days of fasting and abstinence;
- (5) contribute to the support of the Church; and
- (6) observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage.

These various commitments are all ways our basic Christian commitment to follow Christ are lived out in His Church.

## ***Spirituality: Eucharist & family***

The Eucharist and the Family

The richest, most complex Sacrament, and the one most difficult to understand in depth and define is surely the Eucharist. For this reason, we need to have recourse to different names, each of which describes its particular aspects: Eucharist, Lord's Supper, Breaking the Bread, Eucharistic Assembly, Memorial, Holy and Divine Liturgy, Communion, Holy Mass.

We have to acknowledge that we, Christians, are not fully aware of the value of the word "Eucharist". The term is Greek and it is incomprehensible for most people. The two verbs that make up the term,

“eucaristien” and “eulogien” recall the Hebrew blessings, especially at meals, which proclaim God’s works: creation, redemption, sanctification. Therefore, Eucharist means “thanksgiving”.

An exhaustive explanation of the value of the Sacrament of the Eucharist is found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It explains the reasons why the Eucharist is above all the sacraments, “almost the crowning of spiritual life and the end towards which all the sacraments tend”, as St. Thomas states in the *Summa Theologica*.

Even though we cannot understand all the spiritual richness that the Eucharist represents for our Christian formation—which is expressed in the different names by which it is called—nonetheless, our thought as Christians “on the move” cannot help but go to Sunday Mass and Communion.

It is during the Mass, especially at some intense moments, that we manage to remain in silent conversation with Christ, divested of our vanity and despoiled of ourselves, aware of our weaknesses, fears and doubts. In those moments, our thoughts as parents go to our families, and a desire grows in us to thank God for the gifts he has given us, for our children and grandchildren, for the favors we have received, and for the joys and satisfactions we have had and continuously get from life. Perhaps this is the most beautiful moment of our day. In addition to feeling a great inner need to thank God from the bottom of our hearts, we also feel spiritually united to our spouses and family members. In an unconscious, but surely intense way, they too are in communion with Christ who has always loved us and wants what is good for us. From this mysterious interweaving of spiritual ties, we realize that we are not alone with our miseries and weaknesses because God is close to us, even at the most critical and difficult moments.

The knowledge, then, that the entire Christian community is gathered together all over the earth to give thanks to God in the Eucharist reconciles us with the whole world. It makes us see our neighbor closer to us, and, above all, it lets us see how great God’s Love is, which is distributed among all his creatures.

We have all experienced how beautiful it is, as a family, to come together on Sunday in church to pray together. Together we feel the same sentiments of gratitude to God. Even if going to Mass on Sunday may feel like a routine at times, a cold, repetitive “precept” to be observed (like when we were children and our parents forced us to “sanctify the holy day”), nonetheless, it does leave a sense of satisfaction in our hearts. We feel more goodness and well-disposed towards others, as well as reassured and less insecure about ourselves. However, it is especially Communion that enthralls and involves us. Jesus’ words, “Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him”, penetrate within and upturn the entire person. To know that Jesus Christ is inside me is to relive his sacrifice for the remission of our sins and understand the greatness of his love for others. This makes us capable of getting away from a disordered life, the different futilities that try to seduce us, our pride and our selfishness. Above all, however, the greatness and the value of real Love appear clearly to us. This Love, present in Christ’s sacrifice for the salvation of all humanity, constitutes a valid and real reference point for the family. This Love is a beacon that can and must enlighten our life together and make us overcome, with serenity and hope, the inevitable obstacles that come up in our daily lives which, despite everything, should be faced joyfully and as witness for those who are navigating amidst uncertainties and do not have the perspective of the resurrection.

## ***Wisdom: Anti-suffering***

The most popular book of devotion in the history of the Catholic Church is *The Imitation of Christ* written by Thomas KEMPIS. It was first published in 1471, and has gone through six thousand separate editions in dozens of languages. Thomas wrote this book as he watched his best friends and fellow members of his religious community suffer and die from the plague. Much of the book revolves around the issue of suffering.

Thomas wrote that it was not deep words that made a person holy and upright, but a good life, lived in God’s presence. Thomas believed that God walked with the simple and revealed God’s very self to the humble. For Thomas, there is no solution to suffering except to put your faith in the person of Jesus Christ.

The book of Job, in the Bible, explores the mystery of innocent people experiencing misery and evil. In this book, Job suffers great pains and hardships, but comes to the conclusion that faith in God must transcend personal pain and suffering.

Jesus advises his followers to take up their daily cross and follow him (Mt 10:38). Saint Paul reminds us that we suffer with Christ so that we may also be glorified with him (Rom 8:17). The Letter of James even goes

so far as to challenge Christians to consider trials of any kind as a nothing but a great joy (1:2).

There is no doubt that we will all suffer. It is part of being alive. Our faith in Jesus is the bridge that can lead us over the chasm of suffering to the place of peace that so many of the early martyrs and great saints found.

## Story

*“A professor can never distinguish himself in his work than by encouraging a clever pupil, for the true discoverer are among them, as comets amongst the stars.”*

During my high school graduation week, 20 of us seniors were summoned by our science teacher, to a mysterious meeting. Why us? we wondered.

He, wearing his signature bow tie and hornrimmed glasses, handed each of us a small white box. “Inside,” he said smiling, “you’ll find a charm or a tie tack decorated with a seed pearl. Boys and girls, that pearl stands for your potential -the things you have going for you. Just as a seed placed inside an oyster can grow into a pearl of great value, so each of you has a seed of greatness within.”

I bit my lip to hold back tears as I stared at the tiny pearl set in a silver charm. How much those words would have meant a day earlier, before I’d learned I was pregnant. The news spelled the end of a dream -my own and my mother’s. As long as I could remember, Mother had set aside a few dollars each week toward college for my sister and me. Education, she told us, was the way to escape the life of the coal mines in our town.

I was three when my father entered the sanitarium with tuberculosis. Even after he was released a few years later, Mother’s wages from the corner grocery store often fed the family. From hardship was born her dream that one day my sister and I would change the pattern.

Now, instead of pride, I’d brought shame on the family. In our close-knit community, premarital sex was a scandal. Though we’d wanted to finish college first, Scott and I married after my high school graduation. By the time Scott graduated from college, a second child had arrived. With a growing family to support, Scott joined the Army. We were moved from base to base, and another child was born. All the while, I’d look at the charm dangling from my wrist and wonder what “greatness” my teacher had seen in me. Finally, I tucked the bracelet away in a drawer.

After seven years, Scott took a civilian job near town. Now that our youngest child was in school, I threw myself into volunteer projects. When the restlessness continued, I tried various jobs -store clerk, aerobics instructor. I was busy, I was helping others, I was adding to the family income, and still, I’d open that drawer, look at the bracelet and think: Are you building on that little seed my teacher saw? You have potential. Find it! Use it! At night, while everyone slept, the old goal of college would keep me awake. But then I’d think, I’m 35 years old! My mother must have guessed at my turmoil, because one day on the phone she said, “Remember the college money I saved? It’s still there.” I could only stare at the receiver in my hand.

Seventeen years had not been enough to blunt Mother’s dream. When my teacher had spoken of “things going for you,” I couldn’t name one. But now they were everywhere! Faith in God. A mother’s dream. A husband’s encouragement. It took me six more months to work up the courage and I enrolled at the university. When my aptitude tests pointed to a career in teaching, I was incredulous. Teachers were confident people like my teacher. But the tests were so definite that I entered the teacher-training program. Going back to school was more difficult than I had feared, however. I was competing with people half my age and feeding my family packaged meals in a dusty house.

One afternoon that freshman year, after a particularly stressful class, I drove home in tears, wondering if I really belonged back in school. For self-doubters, quitting always seems the sensible thing. Our older daughter would be entering college in the fall. Instead of straining the family budget, I thought, I should be earning money for my child’s education.

A few days later, I ran into my teacher at the dentist’s office. I hadn’t seen him in years. I told him about the seed pearl and how it had goaded me back to school. “But it’s turning out to be too hard,” I said. “I know,” he agreed. “My husband didn’t start college till his thirties, either.” I listened, amazed, as he described struggles like my own. I’d always assumed my teacher had been teaching for years; in fact, I learned that my graduating

class had been one of his first. I saw that chance meeting with his wife as a sign that I should stick out the next three years.

After graduating, I took a job teaching English at a local high school. Because of the years I'd spent away from school I tried to bring the real world into the classroom. Newspapers were as much a part of my curriculum as the classics; factory visits and talks by local employers were as important as Shakespeare.

Toward year's end, the principal stunned me by saying he was nominating me for a national award for excellence in first-year teaching. In the application, I was to tell how one of my own teachers had inspired me. And so, I told the story of the seed pearl. I realized it had functioned exactly as a seed in an oyster is supposed to -as an irritant, never letting the oyster alone until it's built something beautiful.

Indeed, I was one of 100 teachers to receive the first-year award, and the teachers who inspired us were each given a teacher tribute award. When the two of us met for a newspaper interview, I learned how appropriate the timing was: my teacher was retiring the following year. I learned something else that day. My ex-teacher revealed that he, too, had thought he wouldn't succeed. After getting poor grades in high school, he drifted, unable to believe in the future because he didn't believe in himself. What turned him around? "A renewed spirituality and seeing other people's faith in me," he said. Suddenly, understanding dawned. "That's what we had in common, wasn't it?" I said. "The kids you gave the seed pearls to -you saw 20 young people who lacked confidence." "No," he said. "I saw 20 people with seeds of something great."

## *Jokes (208)*

### *Heavenly Smile*

One Sunday morning after church God and St Peter went to play golf. God teed off. He gave a mighty swipe and sliced the ball off into the rough beside the fairway.

Just as the ball was about to hit the ground, a rabbit darted out of a bush, picked it up in his mouth and ran with it down the fairway.

Suddenly an eagle swooped down, picked the rabbit up in its claws and flew it over the green. A man with a rifle took aim and shot the eagle in mid-flight. The eagle let go of the rabbit.

The rabbit fell onto the green and the ball rolled out of its mouth into the hole.

St Peter turned to God in annoyance and said, "*Come on now! Do you want to play golf or do you want to fool around? And how about you? Do you want to understand and play the game of life or fool around with miracles?*"

### *Smile*

Nisterus the Great, one of the holy Fathers of the Egyptian Desert, was one day walking in the desert with a large number of disciples who revered him as a man of God.

Suddenly a dragon appeared before them and they all ran away. Many years later, as Nisterus lay dying, one of the disciples said to him, "*Father, were you also frightened the day we saw the dragon?*"

"No," said the dying man. "*Then why did you run away with the rest of us?*" "*I thought it better to flee the dragon, so I would not have to flee from the spirit of vanity later.*"

### *Guess what?*

Guess what the ant said to the elephant when Noah was lining up all the animals to get them into the ark. He said: "STOP PUSHING!"

### *The One that didn't get away*

Last January, some Russians were ice fishing about 60 miles northwest of Moscow when one caught a 27-inch pike. Showing off for his buddies, he held the fish high and kissed it on the mouth. But the pike clamped down hard on the man's nose and its jaws locked tightly even after the man's companions beheaded it. Doctors at a hospital finally set the man free.

### *Secret of Good Golf*

I've had a good day when I don't fall out of the golf cart. (*Buddy Hackett*)

## *Plastic surgery*

A 54-year-old woman had a heart attack and was taken to the hospital. While on the operating table she had a near death experience.

Seeing God she asked "Is my time up?" God said, "No, you have another 43 years, 2 months and 8 days to live."

Upon recovery, the woman decided to stay in the hospital and have a face-lift, liposuction, breast implants and a tummy tuck. She even had someone come in and change her hair color and brighten her teeth! Since she had so much more time to live, she figured she might as well make the most of it.

After her last operation, she was released from the hospital. While crossing the street on her way home, she was killed by an ambulance.

Arriving in front of God, she demanded, "I thought you said I had another 43 years? Why didn't you pull me from out of the path of the ambulance?"

God replied: "I didn't recognize you."

## *Famous Quotes (5)*

### **Advice:**

--Advice when most needed is least heeded.

--In the multitude of counselors there is safety. (Proverbs 11:14)

--Nothing is given so freely as advice. (French Proverb)

--He that gives good advice, builds with one hand; he that gives good counsel and example, builds with both; but he that gives good admonition and bad example, builds with one hand and pulls down with the other.

(Francis Bacon)

### **Affliction:**

--I thank God for my handicaps, for through them, I have found myself, my work and my God. (Helen Keller)

### **Age:**

--Old age is when you find yourself using one bend-over to pick up two things.

--By the time we learn to watch our step, we're not stepping out very much.

--In youth the days are short and the years are long; in old age the years are short and the days long.

(Nikita Panin)

--The first forty years of life give you the text; the next thirty supply the commentary on it.

(Arthur Schopenhauer)

--When people tell you how young you look, they are also telling you how old you are. (Gary Grant)

--To be seventy years young is sometimes far more cheerful and hopeful than to be forty years old.

(Oliver Wendell Holmes)

--How old would you be if you didn't know how old you was? (Satchel Paige)

--The tragedy of old age is not that one is old, but that one is young. (Oscar Wilde)

--The beauty of old men is the grey head. (Proverbs 20:29)

--Age is a sorry traveling companion. (Danish proverb)

--No one is so old as to think he cannot live one more year. (Cicero)

--When a woman tells you her age it's all right to look surprised, but don't scowl. (Wilson Mizner)

--If wrinkles must be written upon our brows, let them not be written upon the heart. The spirit should never grow old. (James A. Garfield)

--The woman who tells her age is either too young to have anything to lose or too old to have anything to gain. (Chinese proverb)

--"You don't stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing."

--Dogs have owners. Cats have staff.

### **Aggressiveness:**

--The individual activity of one man with backbone will do more than a thousand men with a mere wishbone. (J. H. Boetcher)

--Not only strike while the iron is hot, but make it hot by striking. (Oliver Cromwell)

--You can't achieve anything without getting in someone's way. (Abba Eban)

--Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might. (Ecclesiastes 9:10)