



THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN WINTER'S ORDINARY TIME

From Father Robert

In the gospel, God's remembrance of and compassion for suffering humanity comes most tangibly in the healing presence of Jesus. From the religious service in the synagogue Jesus moves immediately into the house of Simon and Andrew, accompanied by James and John, disciples who are having a busy apprenticeship. In the healing of Simon's mother-in-law, we have a vignette of the mission of Jesus, the free man, who cares nothing for taboos that prohibited the touching of a woman not one's wife, and especially on the Sabbath. Jesus has healed the tormented man in the synagogue, and he will make no discrimination between male and female, even though to hold the hand of the sick woman could earn Him the accusation of ritual uncleanness. Compassion has a more urgent hold on Jesus, and His raising of her is by the same power that God will manifest in raising Jesus from the dead. The response of Simon's mother-in-law to her healing is to serve (*diakonei*, which the Lectionary translates as "she waited on them") Jesus

and His companions. The last use of this word in Mark's gospel is in Mark 15:41, and here it is again with reference to women who followed and served Him, so framing the mission of Jesus from its beginning to His death with the service of women. It is a reminder, too, that all who have experienced the healing power of Jesus, in the flesh and in the Spirit, should respond with service of others.

Even though Jesus did not subject Himself to Sabbath restraints, the crowds wait until "after sunset" when the Sabbath was over to bring those who are sick in body and mind to Him. Jesus responds to the universal longing from wholeness and healing, vanquishing the reign of evil, yet commanding the evil spirits not to speak of Him because not until His death will His true messianic identity be revealed. Before that, such a revelation, especially by the proclamation of the formerly possessed, could be manipulated by Jesus' enemies into false charges of His being on the side of the kingdom of evil (see Mark 3:22-27).

To one to whom Jesus is first accountable, however, is not the sick or possessed person, not Simon or his companions. Jesus' life is above all directed to God Who is acting in Him and through Him, so early the next morning He seeks a place where He can be alone with God in prayer. Simon and some of his companions are described not as Jesus' "followers," but as those who "pursue" Jesus. There is a note of accusation and misunderstanding in Simon's words: "everyone is looking for you" (including us!). There is no appreciation of Jesus' own need to search for His God in prayer. What Jesus has heard in His prayer is the call to proclaim the reigning presence of God in other towns, to move on from the enthusiastic reception of yesterday, because that is why He came. How often are we

tempted to stay with the “yesterdays” of success and acclamation and hesitate to go forward to the largely unknown “tomorrow’s” to which God is calling us? And how important is prayer in our discernment of God’s call?



You “listened” to today’s scripture passages but what did you “hear?”

In the first reading Job laments, “My days come to an end without hope.” Have you ever found yourself in a similar position of despair? What sustained you?

Today’s responsorial psalm calls us to “praise the Lord, who heals the broken-hearted.” How has God’s healing action tended your own heart through life’s struggles and sorrows?

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians of all that he does “for the sake of the gospel.” How do you proclaim the gospel in word and action?

Jesus rises early in the morning and goes off “to a deserted place” to pray. Where and when do you find silence and solitude to be with God?



On Wednesday, January 13th, we received a notification from The Vatican that the experience of Ash Wednesday will be different this year due to the pandemic. I share with you the article from Catholic News Service:

The Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments asked priests to take special anti-COVID-19 precautions this year when distributing ashes on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17, including **sprinkling ashes on the top of people's heads rather than using them to make a cross on people's foreheads.**

The congregation's note on the "distribution of ashes in time of pandemic" was published on the congregation's website Jan. 12 and directs priests to say "the prayer for blessing the ashes" and then sprinkle "the ashes with holy water, without saying anything."

"Then he addresses all those present and only once says the formula as it appears in the Roman Missal, applying it to all in general: 'Repent and believe in the Gospel' or 'Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.'"

"The priest then cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask and distributes the ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places," it said. **"The priest takes the ashes and sprinkles them on the head of each one without saying anything."**

The usual practice would be to repeat the formula — "Repent and believe in the Gospel" or "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return" — to each person as the ashes are sprinkled on the top of their head or rubbed onto their forehead. Sprinkling ashes on the top of people's heads, rather than marking foreheads with ashes, is the customary practice at the Vatican and in Italy. Given the spread of the coronavirus, the practice has the advantage of not requiring the priest to touch multiple people.

The Latin, Italian, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese versions of the note also specify that the mask should cover the priests' "nose and mouth."

Here at St. Ignatius of Antioch, Father Moses and I will administer the "Sprinkling of Ashes" on Wednesday, February 17th, as directed by The Vatican, at 8:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 12:00 Noon, 4:00 p.m., and 6:00 p.m. **You are invited to Walk Up to the doors of the church where you will be greeted, sanitize your hands with disinfectant, have your temperature taken, and then step forward to receive the sprinkling of ashes on your head. No words will be spoken.** Once the ashes have been sprinkled on your head, you may turn and leave by the right main entrance door. Masks must be worn and social distancing observed at all times.

For the past 16 years, our Lenten Alms have been directed to our adopted parochial school of St. Peter Martyr, Pittsburg. We will once again do this in 2021. Envelopes will be available for your contribution or you may use the envelope provided in your envelope pack. Thank you for your Lenten sacrifices that will be expressed through your financial generosity to St. Peter Martyr and our support for Catholic Education.



Thank you to our parishioner volunteers who continue to come faithfully every other week to clean the church and bathrooms during the pandemic, the most recent time being last Saturday: **Jun Bajet, Reno and Thelma Benasfre, Angela Bueno, Al Cosce, Carole Miller, Mency Osborne, Rose Salamanca, and Steve Rojek.**



DIOCESE OF OAKLAND - COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY

We are living our Catholic faith in the midst of one of the greatest global health crises in recent times. Therefore, the Diocese of Oakland strongly recommends all clergy, employees and volunteers to get COVID-19 vaccinations as soon as possible.

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and the California Catholic Conference of Bishops have all approved as morally acceptable the vaccinations now available (Pfizer and Moderna) as well as two likely to become available soon (Johnson & Johnson, Astra Zeneca).

This strong recommendation is also consistent with the advisory issued by the State of California's Department of Public Health. Pope Francis has received the vaccination.

Beyond protecting their own health and safety, Catholics also have an obligation to protect their family, friends, co-workers and community by vaccinating as soon as feasible. One should consult with their doctor concerning any personal health concerns.

Clergy, parish employees and volunteers with questions regarding this policy should contact Gloria Espinoza in the Department of Human Resources at 510-267-8359 or gespinoza@oakdiocese.org.

School employees should first contact their principal. Vaccinations must be arranged currently through your health care provider or through the county health department in which you reside or work.

Several pertinent websites follow: Contra Costa County: Central Website:
<https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/vaccine Phases of Distribution>:

<https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/distributionphases> Vaccination Sign Up:
<https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/get-vaccinated>



The Sanctuary Lamp burns to the Glory of God and in Loving Memory of Alfredo and Elina Avelar from their daughter, Terry Pedras.

The gift and freedom in 'I don't know'

2 February 2021

By Sister Jane Maisey

Spirituality



"Are you serious? I mean, c'mon? Really?"

Recently I heard these words exclaimed from the lips of a frustrated teacher while she loomed over a photocopier at school. Her words, proclaimed with gusto, were like

greyhounds bursting out of the gates — and they're off. ...

When I heard her, I happened to be on my knees, trying to figure out how to load paper into Tray 7 (God only knows where that is). At first I was startled, but then found myself empathizing with her frustration. I stood up to ask if she was OK, our eyes met, and before I knew it, we were both laughing and crying at the same time.

Her arms were flung out like rubber bands expanding, and suddenly those arms snapped back — and I found myself wrapped up in love. As we embraced, rocking side to side, our teary eyes both welled up as our hearts contemplated joy and sadness. I felt her pain and she felt mine: We were, indeed, in it together.

It seems to me that 2020 was the year of reverberantly rhetorical "Are you serious?!" moments.

Watching from "Down Under," we have a unique take on the world. Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands are far removed in physical distance from Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas. If viewing world news is anything to go on, I understand that all countries have been affected differently. But I have also seen a new emergence of a constant for all. We have all lost our sense of certainty, we have all lost control in a new way. Gone are the days when we could plan in school, or in other ministries.

2020 was undoubtably a year for the classic Merton Prayer: "My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end." I wonder if Thomas Merton would have befriended the classic saying, "If you want to make God

laugh, tell God your plans." Well, I hope you're having a good laugh, God, because I have a few words for you!

With the confusion and inability to plan, I have found myself saying "I don't know" a lot more. People often ask: When will you see your family in New Zealand? What will your school do for the end of year? What will you be doing next week? The response to all: "I don't know." And you know what? I'm finding that there is a freedom in not knowing.



Sr. Jane Maisey with students of Mount St. Joseph High School in Milperra, Sydney, Australia in 2019. To Maisey, the following year, 2020, was the year of reverberantly rhetorical "Are you serious?!" moments. (Provided photo)

I've come to see this time in many ways as a gift — the gift of not knowing. If my God/our God is truly all-loving, then this must be a gift of love we have all received. All the "I don't know" moments, seemingly packed full of emotions such as joy and grief, all revolve around God's grace. My joy grows by welcoming "not knowing." If Jesus reminds me to let go and forgive seventy-seven times (Matt 18:21-22), then perhaps I also need to keep choosing to not know, not once, but infinitely seventy-seven times more?

Lately, I've also been asked by staff and students, "Where is God in all this?"

Oh boy, trying to know God's ways seems to me like trying to know how to herd cats — their destination is surely best left unknown! As we do know, there is much mystery to our faith, the surprising ways of God are not always our ways. As Isaiah reminds me: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord." ([Isaiah 55:8](#)). This feels like a time when I/we are being invited to live more and more into mystery, becoming more comfortable with not knowing, and most certainly not planning. As Joyce Rupp [puts it](#), "The difference between confusion and 'don't know' is that confusion can only see one way out and that way is blocked, while 'don't know' is open to miracles and insights."

In seeking ways to live with this new mysterious uncertainty, and perhaps even find some collective joy in it, we have adopted some new language as individuals and community at school. For example, we have picked up on the term already in use in the medical community: "[Covid Brain](#)." The way we use it, having Covid Brain does not mean you have the virus, but instead symptoms that include disbelief, inability to plan, forgetfulness, tears with simultaneous laughter, and general feelings of "C'mon ... what ... really!?" For example, when a teacher misplaces his/her/their keys for the fifth time, and sends an email to all staff, one could easily proclaim an explanation: "Covid Brain!" Thank God for the "calamity of community."

Amidst the uncertainty and many Covid Brain moments, a deeper awareness of one other constant has emerged — through all the surprises, tears and "I don't know" moments, God is with us 24/7. As I continue to run or walk in nature, it reminds me that

our loving God is ever present, ever transforming and closer than I can imagine.



Graphic created by Sr. Jane Maisey for the celebration of the 10-year anniversary of the canonization of their congregation's founder, St. Mary MacKillop (Provided graphic)

I've more deeply realized this year that I need to trust in the presence of God, while fallibly letting go into the "Are you serious?" mystery. It's not easy, but by choosing "I don't know" while trusting in God's constant transforming love, my vision has cleared to hear the birds chirping, see ducklings waddling, kangaroos pouncing, sun rising and sun setting — transforming, making all things new, in God's time, in God's ways.

This year was also special for our congregation. On the October 17, 2010, our co-founder [St. Mary MacKillop](#) was canonized in Rome. [Ten years on](#), she especially reminds us to renew our courage and trust more deeply in God through the surprises and uncertainty. She [wrote](#) to sisters in 1877, expressing her relationship with God: "*He wants us to take fresh courage — to lean more on Him and less on ourselves.*" So, perhaps when you next load paper into your printer, feel a sense of "don't know," think about herding cats, or hear

birds chirping, you might spare a thought for us Down Under. We may be far away in distance, but we are all connected through and to the sacred mystery. May our hearts remain united, leaning on God and collectively proclaiming with courage, "I don't know."



Jane Maisey

Jane Maisey is a Sister of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart. Currently she is studying part time and doing pastoral ministry in a high school in Sydney, Australia.

***Justice Corner by Carolyn Krantz,
Pastoral Associate***

Today's scriptures are filled with golden nuggets for us to consider. In the Old Testament reading from Job, there is an expression of discouragement. We recognize similar feelings having been through the past year with COVID. "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; they come to an end without hope...The night drags on; I am filled with restlessness until dawn." We have to piece these feelings together with Job, chapter 38, when God chides Job by saying "Where were you when I created the earth!" In other words, who are we to think we know the mind and purposes of God? If Job had not suffered, we would not have had his example written in the scriptures. We are encouraged to say "Yes" in faith, even when we do not understand God's purpose.

Then there is the example in St. Paul's letter

to the Corinthians. "I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. To the weak, I became weak so as to win over the weak." In other words, in whatever condition I found in suffering humanity, I became like them, suffered with them, became one with them. This is the teaching about entering into the hearts of those suffering people who cross our paths. It is about "smelling like the sheep," walking with those whose lives are messy and confused.

When I worked in the Tenderloin we had "Scripture study" once a week. People would walk in off the street to join us and share their understanding of the meaning of the scripture of the day. They "broke open" the meaning of the Word for me in ways I never would have learned if I had been reading the scriptures with those whose houses were clean and who never worried about where their next meal was coming from. The problem is that no one likes to be a "slave" or to be seen as "weak." Being seen as weak in this society invites criticism and derision. Yet that is what we are invited to in this reading, to be at one with the poor and suffering of this world.

Imagine you are in the caravan walking from Central America to the United States. Food is hard to come by and your feet have blisters. There is total uncertainty as to what happens when you reach the border. Yet your faith impels you to keep walking. You cannot go back to the gang-ridden life that exists in your home country. You dream of a better life for yourself and your children, so you keep walking. Can you imagine the weakness and hardship it takes to do this? "To the weak, I became weak..." Migrants are an example to us of our journey of faith. We set out on a road. We have almost nothing. We must put one foot in front of the other believing in God's promise to us.

In the Gospel we have many examples of the way our lives are to be shaped. First there is Peter's mother-in-law who when she is cured, gets up immediately and "waits on them." She doesn't wallow in her illness but knows that she is cured for service to others.

Then there is Jesus who cured and drove out demons. There are many sick and many demons in today's society. Can we in faith do that? Can we bring the Good News to those with illness and confusion?

Then there is Jesus who makes a choice to go into a deserted place to pray and decide His next move. He must leave the village where He is respected and go into a new and unknown place. God is calling Him to move beyond the known to the unknown so that others may hear the Good News that God loves them and cares for them. This is an example to us. We must seek out "deserted places" and always pray about our decisions. We must take the next step in faith that the God who cares for us will be with us on the journey. So many golden nuggets in today's readings! Take time to examine them and see what God is inviting you to this week.

***Parish Perspective by
Peter Degl'Innocenti, Pastoral Associate
Nonverbal Communication***

One of the many downsides of wearing masks is the lack of nonverbal communication. "Are you smiling under that mask?" we have been asked. People cannot see if we are smiling, frowning, biting our lip in anger, or yawning in boredom. We still have our eyes to be used in the nonverbal arena of communication. Sparkling clear eyes will usually be accompanied by the unseen smile beneath a mask. A furrowed brow and the tilt of eyebrows will still put us on maximum alert that someone isn't happy. The real estate

above the eyebrows, the upper forehead, is usually void of expressive means; that is except on Ash Wednesday.

On Ash Wednesday we can still communicate loudly and clearly the truth about life, death, the promises of Jesus Christ, and what we believe. While our mouths may be partly covered by a mask, we can tell the people we meet, pass-by, or enjoin in conversation that we understand we are ashes and to ashes we shall return. Therefore, the way we follow Jesus and live our lives becomes the reason and purpose for living. It challenges us to examine the way we have been living and how and in what areas we need to change for the better.

It is a joy to see that we here at St. Ignatius of Antioch Church have a very full schedule of services where ashes will be distributed. Check the online sources for the schedule as things may change by the time Ash Wednesday rolls around. Given that caveat, it is good to see parishioners able to participate more fully in all the offerings the Church has. The Liturgy is certainly paramount for participation, but the many other traditions and sacramentals that solidify our resolve and self-image as followers of Jesus Christ are also essential.

Christianity is all about relationship, I was once told. Relationship depends on communication, verbal, nonverbal, symbolism, and most importantly the language of the heart.

Expansion Project Update

Current Status Briefly

Tentative start date: April 2021.

- Construction bid of \$1,545,315 accepted January 2021. Does not include other costs associated with construction (e.g. inspections, architect fees, change orders, etc.) or replacing the tile roof.
- City of Antioch Building Permit issued January 2021.
- Parish has requested that Diocese approve and sign the construction contract. Will have a firm start date once construction contract is signed.

Project Scope Summary

- Existing cabinets in the parish hall will remain and the restroom will be converted to storage.
- Remove all the appliances, fixtures, equipment and cabinets in the existing kitchen.
- Remove the wall that separates the existing kitchen and the parish hall. The capacity of the hall will increase approximately by the area of the existing kitchen.
- Reuse as much as possible all the existing kitchen cabinetry in the newly constructed storeroom and a new storage area in the existing hall.
- Construct an entirely new kitchen and storeroom located where the existing patio stands. See appliance list on reverse. Install a janitor's closet with chemical storage and mop sink.
- Installation of a monitored fire alarm system that will also include the sanctuary.
- Bury the existing "V" ditch and expand existing concrete walkway to accommodate the new kitchen. Replace and relocate the existing wooden retaining wall with a keystone wall.
- Construct a new trash enclosure at the north side of the vacant field.
- The roof (not part of this project) will be replaced concurrently with the expansion construction using our reserve funds and an alternative roofing contractor.
- The scope of the project is limited by available funds in order to obtain the necessary approval to move forward. It does not include upgrades to the parish hall flooring, interior lighting or new furnishings (e.g. tables, chairs, dishes, silverware or kitchen pots and pans).



Kitchen Equipment Summary

- Two six burner Wolf ranges with ovens.
- Two pot filler faucets located at the ranges.
- 24” Wolf griddle with stainless steel stand.
- Vulcan Fryer - will use our existing fryer.
- 16’3” Gaylord exhaust ventilator including an Ansel fire suppression system.
- Two large stainless steel food preparation areas with a sinks.
- Enclosed dry storage area with shelving.
- Manitowoc ice maker—will use our existing ice maker.
- Beverage Air walk-in cooler with Westpac shelving.
- Beverage Air reach-in freezer with adjustable tray slide racks.
- Stero Model dishwasher with clean dish drying shelving.
- One 3 compartment stainless steel sink with drain boards.
- Grease removal system, including a below ground grease interceptor.
- Gaylord condensation removal hood located at the dishwasher.
- Appropriate sinks dedicated solely for handwashing.
- Mop sink, mop holder and chemical storage cabinet (located in the new storage room outside the kitchen area).



Finances

As noted in the Annual Pastoral Report for 2020, the parish committed \$60,000 from parish operating funds to move this project forward. If you have any experience with construction or even home remodeling, you know that it is likely that additional funds will be required in order to complete the project as described above. **Your on going commitment to your campaign pledge is critical. 250 families pledged to this project. If you haven't pledged but are able to do so, please contact the parish office for the necessary forms. EFT and credit card options are available.**