



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

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Cathedral WEEKLY

THE MOST REVEREND THOMAS JOHN PAPROCKI
NINTH BISHOP
OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS

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Website: www.spicathedral.org

Mass Times: Saturday - 4:00pm; Sunday - 7:00am, 10:00am, & 5:00pm

Weekday Masses: Monday through Friday - 7:00am & 5:15pm; Saturday - 8:00am

Reconciliation: Monday through Friday - 4:15pm-5:00pm; Saturday - 9:00am-10:00am & 2:30pm-3:30pm; Sunday - 4:00pm-4:45pm

Adoration: Tuesday & Thursday - 4:00pm to 5:00pm

Diocesan Victim Assistance is available. For the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, please contact: Patricia Kornfield at 321-1155.

Please remember that if you or a loved one is in the hospital, a nursing home or home-bound, to contact the Parish offices or Sr. Francella at 217-522-3342 x 142.

Welcome to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception!

On behalf of our bishop, the Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki, our parishioners, deacons, and priests, I welcome you to the mother church of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois.

The seat of the diocese was moved to Springfield from Alton in 1923. In the same year, "Old St. Mary's" church of Immaculate Conception Parish was named as the pro-cathedral of the new diocese until this cathedral church was built and dedicated in 1928. Currently, our diocese comprises twenty-eight counties in central Illinois, serving over 140,000 members of the Catholic faithful.

I hope that your visit to our Cathedral is one of grace and beauty and that you feel at home in the mother church. I also hope that you will find this edition of the *Cathedral Weekly* to be both informative and spiritually enriching. May God bless you and yours!



Very Reverend Christopher A. House
Rector

Mass Intentions for the Upcoming Week

Monday – March 23

7am: Helen Ziegler (William & Debra Stonikas)
12:05pm: Leo Lenn (Lenn Family)
5:15pm: William Henry Pontzious (Betty & Glen Rogers)

Tuesday – March 24

7am: Boyan Petkov (Judith Mohler)
12:05pm: Terry Mattox (Shana Gray)
5:15pm: Mary Corrigan (Carl & Lou Ann Corrigan)

Wednesday – March 25

7am: Mary Priester (Judith & Ignatius Hodnik)
12:05pm: Richiusa & Leo Families (Family)
5:15pm: Otis Huber (Huber Family)

Thursday – March 26

7am: Ben Garde (Family)
12:05pm: Bonnie Donnals (Edwards Family)
5:15pm: Mary Dwyer (Barbara Bitschenauer)

Friday – March 27

7am: Doris Drea (Asher, Gittler, & D'Alba, Ltd.)
12:05pm: Joyce Jenness (George & Agnes Friedel)
5:15pm: Helen F. Call (Mary Fleischli & Michael Fleischli)

Saturday – March 28

8am: John & Edith Bakalar (John Busciacco)
4pm: Thomas Rapps (Carolyn Yoggerst)

Sunday – March 29

7am: For the People
10am: Adele Karle (John & Mary Sivak)
5pm: Dr. Eugene Stonikas (William & Debra Stonikas)



Blind By Choice

After the Passion Narratives in the four Gospels, this Sunday's Gospel from John of the healing of the man born blind is both the longest and probably the most action-packed of all Gospel passages proclaimed at Mass. This passage is made up of rapid movement and interchanges between the Lord and His disciples, the Lord and the man born blind, the man once healed being interrogated by the Scribes and Pharisees, then the Scribes and Pharisees interrogate the man's parents followed by a second interrogation of him, Jesus's encounter with the man, and finally Jesus's rebuke of the Scribes and Pharisees. What becomes clear in these interchanges is that there are two simultaneous journeys happening: one is moving towards the Light and one is moving away from the Light.

The man whom Jesus heals is said to have been blind from birth. The disciples assume, as was normative for the time, that his blindness was the result of sin, perhaps that of the man's parents. The Lord tells them that his blindness is so that the glory of God might be revealed. This points to an interesting aspect of John's Gospel. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus's miracles are always noted as the result of Jesus being moved with compassion for someone or for a group; in John, the miracles, or, rather, signs, that Jesus performs are not due to his compassion (which surely was not lacking), but to show the glory of God.

Another fascinating aspect of this passage is that Jesus is actually not a main actor. He is the one who animates the scene by healing the man but we see the man himself as the central evangelist. The man does not know who Jesus is but he knows that He must be of God because of what Jesus has done for him. In spite of the bullying and intimidation visited on him by the Scribes and the Pharisees, the man only becomes more persistent in wanting to know more about the man who healed him. Greater than the opening of the man's eyes, is that his heart is opened to a new experience of faith. He professes his faith in Jesus and becomes the Lord's disciple. He begins to walk by the light that is Jesus.

While the man born blind journeys closer and closer to the light that is the Lord Jesus, we see the Scribes and the Pharisees going in the opposite direction. They are comfortable and safe with a belief that God only works within specific parameters, only within the dictates of the law given by the Lord through Moses. They cannot accept that while God may choose to bind Himself to the law, He is never bound by the law. The law is given to lift people up to God, to help them on the journey to Him; but the Scribes and the Pharisees all too often saw the law as an end unto itself and thus made it an idol. The law is good, but God is also able to bring about good outside of the law or beyond it. Ultimately, the Scribes and the Pharisees see Jesus as a threat. They choose to blind themselves to the manifestation of the power of God in Jesus's actions because to accept the truth of Jesus's actions will mean that they have to change and they simply are not willing to do so.

Do we fall into the same traps at times? In our heart of hearts, do we at times know the truth that God is seeking to convey in our lives but we find it easier to "turn a blind eye" rather than acknowledging that maybe we are holding on to something that is contrary to God's will or what God is asking of us? May the Lord heal us of any spiritual blindness and grant us the grace to not be afraid to see life by His light and to walk in his ways.

Father Christopher House is the Rector of the Cathedral and serves in various leadership roles within the diocesan curia, namely Chancellor and Vicar Judicial.

Sunday Reflection

Seeing Christ

Even the blind man in today's gospel sees Christ – and does what he is told by him. Listening and then doing – even in the face of opposition – brings sight and insight.

- How will I look for Christ in every person and in every action this lenten week?
- What is God asking me to do? How will I do it?
- How will I be a sign of Christ's light and life for the elect preparing for Easter Baptism?



How Does Loving One's Enemies Work, Really?

A friend of mine and I were comparing notes on how challenged we feel, sometimes, to offer real forgiveness to friends and family, and the question of enemies.

"Jesus said we are to forgive without limit," my friend said, "but does that mean we're supposed to keep putting ourselves out there to be victimized by people who really know how to hurt us and seem to enjoy doing it?"

It's a conundrum, isn't it? We are supposed to love everyone, forgive "unto seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22), and we know that forgiveness is essential to our spiritual health, even if—in some cases—some people just feel like they prefer the tormentor's role in our personal narratives. "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you," writes the theologian Lewis Smedes, and he's completely right.

Loving everyone is downright difficult and none of us can do it perfectly except the Lord and those saints he has so graced. My friend and I acknowledged it, but she couldn't let it go, and wondered, "Doesn't that mean the person we're avoiding is our enemy? Aren't we not supposed to have enemies?"

Her question reminded me of a what a Benedictine nun says to a novice in Rumer Godden's *In This House of Brede*: "We may quarrel, we may find ourselves going down another staircase to avoid meeting some particular nun, but in times of stress...[we are all there for one another.]"

That, it seems to me, is the essence of how we are to handle difficult relationships. It speaks of a charity that does not put people too frequently in each other's way (and tempt them into a needless, unhappy exchanges), yet is still helpful, when help is really needed, and without resentment or a desire for recognition. It puts enmity to the side for the sake of the greater good.

When I was a little girl, I used to take some comfort from Jesus' command to "love your enemies"; the fact that he used the word "enemies" seemed like a clear acknowledgment that they exist and are a normal part of life. It almost seemed like Jesus was giving us tacit permission to have enemies, to make a place for enemies within our lives, as though they could be compartmentalized and shoved into an unused storage portion of

our soul. When someone explained that "loving one's enemies" meant little more than "not wishing them ill," I felt like I had figured it all out: I could have my enemies, and as long as I didn't actually wish evil on them, I was set for heaven.

That was how I rolled for about twenty years, until I actually heard someone use the word "enemy" when speaking about another. I had asked a woman in the office why she was so aggravated with a fellow we worked with. "I'll tell you why," she steamed at me, "because that man is my *enemy*. If he were dying in the street, I would walk right by him."

Coming from the mouth of a woman I generally found to be pleasant and generous in nature, these were some of the most chilling words I had ever heard; they literally gave me goosebumps. I asked what the man could possibly have done to have earned such a vehement condemnation, and she said, with a terrible expression, "He complained about one of my kids not

being friendly on the phone." It was one of those uncomfortable light-bulb moments, when one realizes that complacent ideas from our youth can no longer work and demand reassessment. I had turned the notion of enemies into the equivalent of a benign spot on a spiritual X-ray: nothing to worry about, no threat to the soul.

That was incorrect. The evidence before my eyes, demonstrated in the dark, tense expression of my coworker and her brutish tone, hit me like a swift punch to the solar plexus; with breathtaking clarity I understood that to entertain the concept of

"having an enemy" was to give it room to grow. No benign practice, this was instead a path to spiritual malignancy—a true cancer that could kill the soul.

Jesus did indeed recognize that there are such things as enemies—and we are not meant to wander through our lives reckless and unaware of what or who can threaten us or do us harm. Certainly, we should not turn a blind eye to evil, which is the true enemy.

But Jesus' command to love those we perceive to be our enemies is actually a tool for discernment, and for our own salvation. To love our enemies means a great deal more than to simply not wish evil upon them; it means making a conscious effort to find a path to our own mercy, for their sake and our own. That path is found, Jesus tells us, through prayer:

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44).



My workplace friend had made an enemy of a man who presumed to criticize her child. That might seem a trivial thing, but we do not know the whole of anyone else's story. Perhaps her child was mildly autistic and his weak phone manners were actually part of a long process of victories and setbacks that had left her with no tolerance for picky critiques. Perhaps the man—her enemy—had been bullied by a parent into caring overmuch about social niceties and was knee-jerk and unthinking in his complaint.

The woman's real enemy, though, was the creation of her seething resentment, which was wounding her, not him. To pray for the man's good would ultimately have helped her to discern thoughtlessness from real evil, and brought a measure of peace.

We all wrestle with what forgiveness demands of us. We may forgive someone with an authentic intention of mercy, truly meaning our words, and yet also pointedly desire to distance ourselves from them as much as possible in order to protect that forgiveness from predictable future assaults that might strain charity. Some relationships are simply toxic beyond sense or

permission, and in those circumstances—especially if we know we have made numerous good-faith attempts to reach out and really seek peace—we can take Jesus' advice to "shake the dust off" our feet" (Matthew 10:14) and move on, just as he told his apostles to do when made unwelcome.

This is one way, at least for a moment, a day, or a year, to maintain our sense of forgiveness and our desire to promote peace—in the world and in our lives—without feeling oppressed by a sense that we have not done enough. New opportunities to hone our forgiveness skills will always come.

*Elizabeth Scalia is a Benedictine Oblate and author of several books including the award-winning *Strange Gods: Unmasking the Idols in Everyday Life* (Ave Maria Press) and *Little Sins Mean a Lot* (OSV). Before joining the *Word on Fire* team as a Editor at Large, she served as Editor-in-Chief of the English edition of *Aleteia*, and as Managing Editor of the Catholic section of *Patheos.com*. Elizabeth also blogs as "The anchoress" at www.theanchoress.com. She is married, and living on Long Island.*

Lessons Through Illness



Recently, I spent a few days in hospital with a serious illness. Thank God I have recovered fully, but it could have been worse—even fatal. Such a brush with death makes you think deeper and changes your perspective. You move into a different space that is already occupied by millions of sick people whose plight you were aware of but did not

consider as much as you should. Here I share a few thoughts from this experience of illness and how it impacts on our call to evangelize.

We hear much about the institutions of society that are the shapers of culture—the media, universities, politics, TV, the internet, movies, art, music, literature, etc. It may seem odd to describe hospitals as shapers of culture, but the truth is that they not only care for people who are sick but remind society that we human beings are weak, limited, and vulnerable. They ground us in what's true—namely, that we are mortal and that suffering is part of our existence, despite modern attempts to avoid it. In those days in hospital, I felt in intimate contact with what is real, with an acute sense of my own mortality. For this I was grateful. Sickness evaporated illusions of invincibility and any traces of pride that makes you think that sickness occurs to others but not to me. I also appreciated how every moment we exist is a miracle given to us by God's grace. There are millions of parts of the body, and if one of them stops working, our well-being and lives are under threat. At all times we depend on the harmony of all the component parts to work together to stay healthy and well. Such a harmony we take for granted so often. Only when

illness strikes do we appreciate this unity of the body and its connection with the soul.

Through all this time of illness, I felt that God was close. In fact, I felt that he was close in the measure that I saw myself with a new understanding of human fragility. My illness was a disruption, a breakthrough of grace, a shattering of presumptions, and a new appreciation of the miracle of life that God gives us at every moment. I began to appreciate those beautiful words of St. Augustine as he recounted Jesus' meeting with the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11): "the two of them remained alone: mercy with misery" (*On the Gospel of John*, 33, 5). I sensed that God through Christ has united himself to our humanity, even when we are sick. I also thought of the times when Jesus himself may have been sick, even though the Gospels don't mention those moments. I contemplated his compassion for the sick when he moved into their space in order to reach them out of love.

I also began to understand that the separation between this life and eternal life, mortality and immortality, is but a narrow stream. So often we think of death as something in the future, in the far distance. We mistakenly think of the life hereafter as something that awaits us only when we die. In contrast, sickness teaches us that death is not a distant stranger but a friend that walks by our side. The truth is that we are always, even those who are most healthy and fit, only a hair's breath from death. This is not meant to scare us but to anchor us in what's true and what is real.

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God's providence decrees that we are on this side of the narrow stream instead of the other, for now. Every time I walk on the beach near my house, I am reminded of this truth. As I walk on the shore, I see the land on my left and the sea on my right as I walk on the margin between them. Looking at the sea reminds me of eternity, of God, and of the communion of saints who are intimately close. Looking at the land symbolizes this life—all that I know and all that is familiar to me. Walking along the beach is like walking side by side with both worlds that interpenetrate as the waves of the sea meet the shore. It is a metaphor that teaches how we are at once grounded in this world but always transcending it to a higher world that we are also connected to.

Another insight I had at the time of illness is the power of intercessory prayer born of solidarity with fellow patients. If you break your arm, it may be painful and inconvenient, but when you meet someone in the hospital suffering from cancer, your broken arm is put in perspective. You begin to see your own sickness in solidarity with others more gravely ill and through faith offer up your suffering out of love for them.

Again, Jesus himself is our inspiration as our priest. On the way to Calvary and on the cross, the Lord moved into spaces occupied by the lost, the sinner, and those in terrible pain. He made his own the experience of severe suffering so that he could reach others in the depths of their pain. As Hebrews puts it:

"It was only right that God who creates and preserves all things, should make Jesus perfect through suffering in order to bring many children to share his glory" (Heb. 2:10).

In the light of this, I began to realize that being ill was not a suspension of my priesthood but an intense expression of it, inspired by Jesus our High Priest, who never stops interceding for us by moving into our space out of loving solidarity and compassion. And because he unites himself to us in our illness, he changes us to become more loving people like himself. In times of suffering, St. Elizabeth of the Trinity invites us to "believe that at those times he is hollowing out in your soul capacities to receive him, capacities that are, in a way, as infinite as he himself. Try then to will to be wholly joyful under the hand that crucifies you" (*Letter 249*).

Sickness can and does hollow out our pride to make more space for God. It also moves us into a new space where we are close to our brothers and sisters who are weak, afraid, and in need of hope.

The experience of illness has strengthened my desire to evangelize and to make Christ known and loved. But perhaps in a different way than before. The light of the Gospel needs to be shared from within our fragile and mortal existence that is sustained by God's providence at every moment of every day. The Good News is that God has united himself to our humanity even when we are ill. Our sick bodies are still the receptacle of God's presence and transforming power. A close encounter with death might be scary, but it makes us more grateful for every day and warns us never to take life for granted. None of us have a right to tomorrow. And while we exist in space and time, we know that eternal life with God and his saints is very close. The good that comes from illness is that we are closer to our brothers and sisters who are weak, sick, and vulnerable. We offer them the Good News of God's love not from a distance but with them and as one of them. I thank God for my recovery and thank him for these valuable lessons learned through illness.

Fr. Billy Swan is a priest of the Diocese of Ferns, Ireland. He holds a degree in chemistry and worked for a number of years for a pharmaceutical company before entering seminary. Ordained in 1998, he served for four years as an associate pastor before further studies in Rome where he was awarded a Licentiate and Doctorate in Systematic Theology from the Gregorian University. He served for four years as the Director of Seminary Formation at the Pontifical Irish College, Rome. He is currently based at St Aidan's Cathedral, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford.



Stewardship Activity

Stewardship of Prayer:

CRS Rice Bowl Prayer of the Week:

Heavenly Father, we pray for all farmers affected by climate change, that they be blessed with plentiful harvests to provide for the needs of their families. We pray also for our community, that we are not blind to the effects that our actions have on the environment, and how they affect those who cultivate the land for their nourishment and living. In your name we pray. Amen.

Stewardship of Service:

The Forge is a group for Springfield-area Catholic young adults seeking community. We host a few events per month that range from prayer opportunities to socials and everything in between. If you would like more information on events hosted by the Forge or to connect with other Catholic young adults in the area, please email us at theforgespringfield@gmail.com.

Stewardship of Gifts

Stewardship of Treasure - March 14th & 15th

Envelopes:	\$4,139.50
Loose:	\$1,315.50
Maintenance:	\$262.50
Total:	\$5,717.50
February EFT	\$21,768.00

Did you know you can make a gift online? If you would like to extend a special gift to the Cathedral, please visit <https://spicathedral.org/give-online/>. We appreciate your generosity!

Next week's second collection will be for the *Pregnancy Care Center of Springfield*. The Pregnancy Care Center of Springfield, Inc. serves pregnant teens, women and their families who reside in Springfield and the surrounding area. Their mission is to help pregnant women bring healthy babies into the world and to prepare parents for parenthood through education, advocacy, and collaborative partnerships with private and public organizations.

Sacraments

Reconciliation

Please keep in your prayers the children of our parish who made their First Reconciliation last weekend. Ask God to bless them with goodness, holiness and humility and a great love for the Sacrament.

Going the Extra Mile

So often in life, people are concerned about the minimum requirements. What is the minimum I must do to get a certain grade? What is the minimum I need to do to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation? What exactly do I have to do to make my boss happy?

This concern does not stop with everyday life but continues into our relationship with God. What exactly is required of me for salvation? How much time, talent, and treasure are enough? Jesus does not call us to this way of life, but instead to a life of unbounding generosity and surrender. Jesus said, "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles." The minimum requirement is one mile; however, we are not to be disciples of minimum requirements and checking off boxes. We are to go the extra mile because that is how we bear witness to the transforming power of Jesus Christ. That is how we change lives and share the grace and love we have received in abundance. Nothing ever changes by doing the minimum. There is no real glory given to God by responding to His call with the minimum.



Imagine a world where all of us good stewards give without ceasing and go far beyond the minimum requirements. Our world would be a very different place. So, what is stopping us?

Tracy Earl Welliver is currently the Director of Parish Community and Engagement for LPI where he manages the company's coaching and consulting efforts. He has spoken on and coached dioceses, parishes, and individuals on stewardship, engagement, strengths, and discipleship all over North America, Australia, and New Zealand.