



FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

THE PATH TO TRUE FREEDOM | FR. CHRISTOPHER HOUSE
WHEN THE SUFFERING BECOMES TOO GREAT | HUDSON BYBLOW
IN THE MIDST OF HARDSHIP, ANXIETY, & SUFFERING | FR. MARK SUSLENKO
GIVE YOURSELF COMPLETELY | TRACY EARL WELLIVER

Cathedral WEEKLY

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

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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



The Path to True Freedom

When I was in eighth grade (1989/1990), I saw the movie *The Shoes of the Fisherman* for the first time; it has since become one of my favorites. The 1968 movie stars Anthony Quinn as a Ukrainian archbishop named Kiril Lakota who has been imprisoned in a Siberian labor camp by the Soviet government. The movie begins with Lakota being brought to Moscow and face to face with Soviet Premier Kamenev, played by Sir Laurence Olivier. The crux of the meeting is that the Vatican has brokered a deal for Lakota's freedom, but before Lakota finds this out, Kamenev asks him if he has learned enough in his confinement to face freedom. Lakota responds that he has already been free for a long time because he has spiritual freedom.

This scene has been bouncing around in my mind lately because I have felt like a captive these past weeks due to the public restrictions in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm filling to bet that I'm not the only one in the parish who has felt that way. At the same time, in honest reflection, I know that I should not feel that listlessness inside because I have allowed my mind to err concerning what true freedom is and from where it comes. True freedom is not about the things of this world, nor is true freedom something that this world can ever give us.

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is traditionally nicknamed "Good Shepherd Sunday" because, you guessed it, the Gospel for this Sunday always speaks of Jesus being the Good Shepherd. When I envision a shepherd, two main qualities come to mind: one who protects and one who leads. The Lord Jesus seeks to do both for us. He offers us grace upon grace to aid us in the struggle against evil, sin, and temptation. The challenge for us is to open up and direct our lives to receiving these graces from the Lord. When we do, not only will we have divine aid in our struggle against sin and temptation but we will also find ourselves being led more and more to detachment from the world, and detachment leads us to true freedom in Christ.

If we find ourselves feeling like caged tigers these days, it's a good time to ask ourselves how attached we are to the world and what belongs to it. Are the world and the things of it bad in and of themselves? No. However, if we seek to attach ourselves to the things of heaven and the life of grace then we will experience greater inner freedom in our lives, the freedom that Lakota knew in *The Shoes of the Fisherman*. If you have some extra time in these days of isolation, try and find the movie on-line, and, more importantly, ask the Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd, to lead you to greater detachment. You will find that the grace of detachment will lead you to greater happiness and peace.

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

Announcements

Holy Mass Livestreams

Did you know you can join us at daily Mass from home? Mass is livestreamed every morning at 7:00am on the Cathedral Facebook page. All Masses are also added to the Cathedral website and can be found at www.spicathedral.org/holy-mass-livestreams/.

You can also join Bishop Paprocki on Sundays at 10:00am for Sunday Mass. These livestreams can be found at www.dio.org/live.

Spiritual Resources

The Cathedral website has many great resources for you to utilize during these uncertain times. Visit www.spicathedral.org/ to view them.

Cathedral First Friday Concerts

At this time, the April, May, and June First Friday Concerts have been cancelled. We hope to resume our First Friday Concerts in August. In the meantime, you can enjoy familiar hymns, psalms, and tunes daily from our very own Mark Gifford. Comfort Music from the Cathedral can be found online on the Sacred Sounds Sacred Spaces Facebook page and on YouTube at Sacred Sounds Sacred Spaces.



When the Suffering Becomes Too Great

Well, here we are in the “new normal” of COVID-19. And we don’t know how long it’s going to be before things change.

We have to strive to be strong and to be together (in spirit, of course). This indeed will test our character, our strength, and our coping mechanisms, and will really show what we’re made of. And the better we learn to handle ourselves in this time of isolation, the more bearable these days will be.

If, however, it seems our lives are beginning to unravel and/or spiral out of control, we would do well to remember that there is someone who can still be our Rock. His name is Jesus Christ. The blessing of having our Catholic faith is that *we know this*. But what about those who don’t? Perhaps this could be a significant moment in history for us to help people *come to desire him more than ever before*. This, of course, will be influenced by the degree to which we radiate peace and joy amid this time of great suffering and upheaval.

If our lives are seen as attractive (in the ways *not* of this world), people might be more open to Jesus, as a result of first becoming more open to *us*. Hopefully, authentic relationships may develop through which a person might choose to eventually take a leap of faith. And we want people to take that leap, for after doing so, what might seem like unbearable suffering can be seen in a new light.



How Faith Transforms What We “See”

In my own life, I was moved by the attractive example of others, opened my heart to Christ more, began to taste his love in a new way, and began to trust him more than I ever had before. This made it easier for me to cooperate with God’s grace, which brought about blessings beyond measure (and much healing). This brought me to realize that *God’s plan* for me was better than *my plan*, and that made me want to know God more intimately, and to cooperate with him (and his graces) more profoundly.

The after-effects of that journey, however, is that I can now see how I am handling myself during this isolation a lot better than if this were to have happened years ago, before my conversion. And today, not only am I able to make this time bearable, but I can also make it *fruitful*. And regardless of the degree of suffering, you can too.

Entering A New State

The reason for that is because I learned that I could use those experiences to enter more deeply into the Passion of Christ. With all due respect to the profound suffering that people are experiencing, in due time, and with due support, we can choose to enter his passion *out of love for him*. In doing so, we can more profoundly unite our hearts and our sufferings to his and can begin to walk with Christ in a more intimate way. This might be easier said than done, but it is still something we can set our sights upon as a target.

Through that, however, we can come to see our purpose in a whole new way. Ultimately, of course, our purpose is to work for the salvation of souls. But if we embrace suffering and unite our hearts to the Lord, we can gain a better understanding of what that actually will look like in our lives, and how our choice to do that might impact others in a positive way. Through that, over time, we can gradually shift from wherever we are, into a *state of mission*—befitting of furthering the Kingdom of God. In that state of mission, we can come to see the suffering is no longer just an occurrence, but rather is *an occurrence that we can transform into something better*. And that “something better” is *penance*.

Carrying Our Crosses

If we become engaged in this mission, we ought to not expect that the crosses we are carrying will just go away. Rather, we ought to expect to gain the strength to carry them, and to carry them well, not with resentment and or bitterness, but rather with interior joy and peace—hopefully eventually to the point where it attractively radiates outward from within us. How we get there isn’t to do with the type of sufferings we are faced with during our lives—or whether they become alleviated—but rather is to do with whether we are willing to *change our thinking*, such that we can willfully accept sufferings as penance instead of experiencing *and wasting* the suffering altogether.

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In other words, if we change our thinking to see that our sufferings can be given as a gift to God by being transformed into a form of penance, then enduring those sufferings can be seen through that new lens; the lens of *charity*. And when we willfully endure penance with the joy of knowing we are giving the gift of our hearts to the Lord (not that we should seek out the suffering to bring this about), that penance can be used for the good of *all* humanity; for the eternal salvation of souls!

What a profound gift to give!

A Renewed Sense of Purpose

In transforming our way of thinking like that, we can become renewed with a sense of purpose that will last our entire lives. Also, it will give us the confidence to embrace future inevitable sufferings with courage so we can serve in even a *greater* capacity.

And that points us to greater intimacy with Christ—in a complete, consistent, and *forever* type of love.

So, when suffering seemingly becomes too great, or at any point leading up to that threshold, perhaps we can remember that complete, consistent, and forever love, and courageously embrace our sufferings as a penance.

If enough people strive to enact this degree of charity, the face of the entire world would be forever changed for the better.

Hudson Byblow is a Catholic speaker and writer who presents at conferences throughout Canada and the United States. He shares his personal testimony to clergy, schools, and parishes and consults for various Catholic agencies, speakers, and educators. He focuses on his story of overcoming trauma while pursuing greater self-honesty and truth. Today he strives to elevate the conversation through clear language while revealing the joy of living chastely in his newfound freedom in the Lord. His website is www.hudsonbyblow.com.

In the Midst of Hardship, Anxiety, & Suffering



Do you ever feel that life is unfair? Though we understand that injustice and inequity exist, there is an underlying assumption that if we believe in God, or better yet get God on our side, then the scales of justice and fairness will somehow be tipped in our favor. God will intervene to set things right. The image we often carry of God is one of an all-powerful and grand fixer. But, if we listen carefully to Sacred Scripture and study faith tradition, this is not who God is at all. Our second reading this weekend gives us a great perspective to pursue. “Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps. *He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth.*” If we look to the passion of Christ, we clearly see a God who does not eradicate or sidestep injustice and great suffering but embraces them. If the idea is to somehow get God to remove these painful stumbling blocks

from our path, then we would have been given this as the example to follow. Instead, we have been brought through insults, unjust accusations, intense suffering, ridicule and death.

Jesus kept himself intact as he went along the path of the cross. It was this anchored integrity, rooted in a relentless relationship he had with his Father that kept him from anger, bitterness, retaliation, defensiveness, and self-pity. His strong resolution to endure this pain brought him to the place where all pain empties into, the Resurrection. The abundant life Jesus desires us to have is our resurrected life! It is not the promise of an easy meal ticket through this earthly one but the glory of transformation and new life to come. This is where the Good Shepherd’s example leads us. It’s not about finding green and safe pastures here. Believing in Jesus as the Good Shepherd isn’t some form of spiritual “bubble wrap” we roll around ourselves to protect us from all of life’s evils and hardships. This is nowhere near the idea. It certainly was not how the original disciples saw things and the way their lives played out didn’t reflect a God who shielded them from all injury and harm. They encountered quite the opposite. But, they followed the example of their Good Shepherd.



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Is your faith in God still strong in the midst of hardship, confusion, anxiety, and suffering? I think that there is a little child in all of us that secretly really wants God to make it all better. Sometimes, that little child is so forward in our personality that God's response determines our level of faith. But, God is saying, "follow the example I gave you." Listen to Him. "This is my beloved Son!" We have a hard time with this, and we fight it tug and pull with God all the way! We beg and plead, look for magical prayers, say the right things, storm the doors of heaven, and exhaust ourselves in the process.

Can you love a God who leaves you with your suffering? "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want." This means *nothing*. Nothing includes a resolution to my problem, an avoidance of pain and suffering, the sheltering of someone I love from hardship or death, a tipping of the scales in my favor or anything else we believe we may want. Nothing. My only desire is God and God alone. If I can find this treasure, a relationship with my Creator, the essence and truth of life, then that is ALL that I need. Let God take care of the rest and let it go.

That's what Jesus, our Good Shepherd, did. He let it go. After he pleaded with God in the garden, he let it go. He realized in the depth of his being that none of this was about his ego or self-preservation. It's not about us either and that's one of the hardest lessons of life to learn. It's not about us. It is about God and the fact that He lovingly chose to make each of us into the tremendously wonderful person we are, placing the very spark of His Divine Presence within us. All we need is God's presence. It is enough.

Suffering and hardship are not the enemy but encounters that can bring us deeper into the mystery and wonder of life and of God's presence. As we embrace every moment of suffering, work through every insult and injustice, find faith, hope, and love in

every moment of life's blessing, we kiss the eternal resurrected presence and life that awaits us. We kiss God.

If we listen deeply and distance ourselves from all the conflicting and distracting voices, this is the Good Shepherd we desperately want to follow. We want ultimately to live and not die. The labor pains we must endure until we get to our eternal destiny are well worth the sacrifice. We will welcome new life just as parents welcome the birth of their child. Suddenly, for the mother who endured all the pains of birth, the experience that seemed relentless and never-ending recedes as the joy and love of birth are ushered in.

Jesus wants to keep us focused. It is too easy to get distracted by this world, as if all that is around us is what is of ultimate importance. It is not. If we pray to keep our focus on Christ and the example he gave us, our loving Good Shepherd will always keep us in his care and never let anyone distract us or lead us astray. If we allow ourselves to be distracted and lured by pastures that may at first appear greener, we can quickly lose our way.

The world struggles with our Good Shepherd. It makes no sense to some why we would believe and pledge our devotion to a God who asks us to accept suffering, injustice, hardship, and death. Coming to a place of acceptance of this does not involve a satisfaction of our minds but a relationship that satisfies our souls and the truth of who we are. Are you willing to leave ALL worldly cares, anxieties and worries behind and return to the true shepherd and guardian of your soul?

Fr. Mark Suslenko is Pastor of the Community of Ss. Isidore and Maria in Glastonbury, CT. Fr. Suslenko publishes reflection articles regularly to his parish's blog. To read more of Fr. Suslenko's reflections, visit <https://isidoreandmaria.org/category/pastor-reflections/>.

CCCW Scholarships

The Cathedral Council of Catholic Women and the Knights of Columbus Council #16126 are offering scholarships to students who are:

- (1) registered members of the Cathedral parish and
- (2) attending a Catholic high school or entering 7th or 8th grade a Catholic grade school in the fall of 2020.

Scholarship applications will be processed electronically this year. Use this link to request an application: <https://forms.gle/u2LvujZBbcHhmsBr7>.

The deadline to submit completed scholarship applications is midnight on Wednesday, May 13, 2020. Late applications will not be accepted. Please email questions to cathedralcccw@gmail.com.



Stewardship Activity

Stewardship of Prayer

O Lord, You have searched me and You know me.
 You know when I sit and when I stand.
 You understand my thoughts from afar.
 With all my ways You are familiar.
 Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord,
 You know the whole of it.
 Where can I go from Your spirit?
 From Your presence where can I flee?
 Truly You have formed my inmost being.
 You knit me in my mother's womb.
 I give You thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made.
 Wonderful are all your works.
 In times of trial and uncertainty, Lord,
 help me to place my trust in You and praise You.
 When I cannot control what happens around me,
 help me to know that all is in Your care.
 May the celebration of the resurrection of your Son
 show me that You bring new life out of the darkest of
 life's moments!
 May I have faith in Your life-giving Presence,
 hope in Your promise for a brighter tomorrow,
 and love so that I can serve You and my sisters and brothers
 more fully.
 Christ, the Good Shepherd, is risen. Amen. Alleluia!

Stewardship of Treasure - April 26th

Envelopes:	\$4,860.00
Easter Envelopes:	\$310.00
<u>Maintenance:</u>	<u>\$150.00</u>
Total:	\$5,320.00

March EFT: \$22,321.85

Did you know you can still 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!

Sunday Reflection

"I Am the Gate."

Doorways and gates can protect those within. This is the image of Jesus today – gate and protector, shepherd and guide. Let Psalm 23 fill our prayer every day this week.

- Because I am protected by the Good Shepherd, whom will I protect this week? How will I do it?
- On what right paths will I let myself be guided?
- What goodness and kindness will shine through my thoughts and actions this week?

Mean What You Say

Missouri is known as the "Show Me" state. There seem to be differing points of view as to how this motto came into existence, but today it is said to speak of a people who operate with common sense and are not easily fooled by slick-talking or show. We would be prudent to adopt such a disposition ourselves. To be this way is not really like St. Thomas in the Gospel when he doubts what he clearly sees right in front of him. It is more about holding ourselves to a standard explained in another motto: "Say what you mean and mean what you say."

If we claim to be Christians, disciples of the risen Jesus, then those around us should be able to tell by our actions. Can someone truly be a disciple of Jesus and not be a good steward of all he has given? Jesus makes himself known to us continually in the Holy Eucharist. When we come together to break bread at Mass, Jesus shows us his love by becoming truly present to us. He is willing to show us. What are we in turn willing to show him?

Every day, Jesus calls us to respond in some way. Our response shows whether we are who we claim: his disciples. I am pretty sure Jesus is not from Missouri, but I know he is not fooled by our half-truths and misguided intentions. He also means what he says and says what he means. Shouldn't his disciples do the same?

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.

