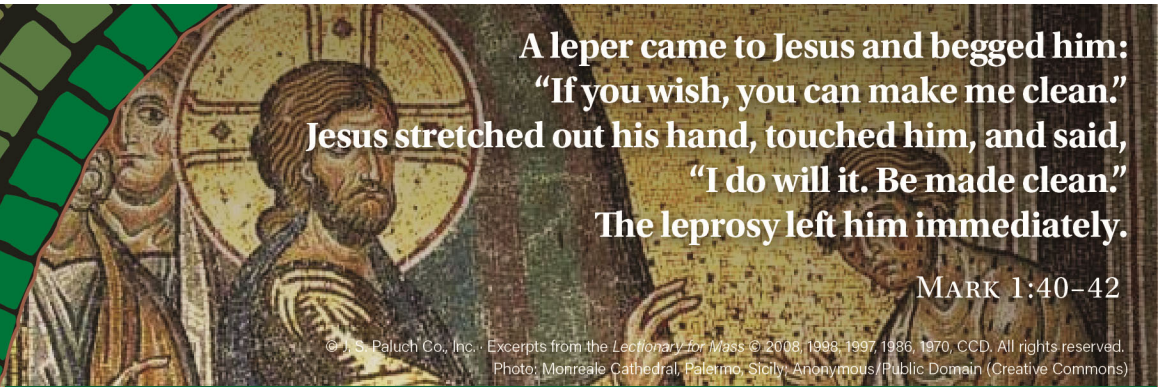


# SIXTH Sunday in ORDINARY TIME

February 14, 2021



**St. John the Evangelist Church**  
309 Lotz Avenue, Altoona, PA 814-942-5503  
[www.stjohnsaltoona.org](http://www.stjohnsaltoona.org)

## PASTORAL STAFF

**Monsignor Michael Becker** - [mbecker253@aol.com](mailto:mbecker253@aol.com); [allinall214@gmail.com](mailto:allinall214@gmail.com)  
**Deacon Gene Neral** - [gene@lifeinfocus.net](mailto:gene@lifeinfocus.net)  
**Kristina Hoyne** - Parish Council President - [inaugh@aol.com](mailto:inaugh@aol.com)  
**Jena Bowman** - Business Manager - [stjohnchurch@atlanticbb.net](mailto:stjohnchurch@atlanticbb.net)  
**Deborah Johnson** - Director of Music/Pastoral Associate - [dj219@msn.com](mailto:dj219@msn.com)  
**Diane Ryan** - Administrative Assistant - [stjohnsecretary@atlanticbb.net](mailto:stjohnsecretary@atlanticbb.net)  
**Mark Krepich** - Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults - [mark.krepich@gmail.com](mailto:mark.krepich@gmail.com)  
**Ken Dunmire** - Maintenance

## NEXT WEEK'S APPOINTMENTS

### LECTORS

Wed. Feb. 17 - 6:00 PM - Darlene Scarpaci,  
Jim Campbell  
 Sat. Feb. 20 - 4:00 PM - Maria Spayd, NOT FILLED  
 Sun. Feb. 21 - 8:00 AM - James Krug, Russell O'Reilly  
 Sun. Feb. 21 - 11:00 AM - Barbara Bundy,  
Patrick Schurr

### ALTAR SERVERS

Wed. Feb. 17 - 6:00 PM - Emily & Ethan Miller  
 Sat. Feb. 20 - 4:00 PM - Keaton Swope, NOT FILLED  
 Sun. Feb. 21 - 8:00 AM - Nicholas Helsley, Mai Linh Do  
 Sun. Feb. 21 - 11:00 AM - Evie & Estella Koch

### EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS

Wed. Feb. 17 - 6:00 PM - Walter Bloom, Cecelia  
Bloom, Daniel Turcovsky  
 Sat. Feb. 20 - 4:00 PM - Connie Baker  
 Sun. Feb. 21 - 8:00 AM - Darlene Scarpaci  
 Sun. Feb. 21 - 11:00 AM - Susanna Tomlinson, Lou  
Ann Clark

### MINISTERS OF HOSPITALITY

Wed. Feb. 17 - 6:00 PM - Connie Baker, John Becker,  
Jane Becker, Ray Kennedy  
 Sat. Feb. 20 - 4:00 PM - Betsy Lloyd, Judy Sneath,  
Larry VanSickel, NOT FILLED  
 Sun. Feb. 21 - 8:00 AM - Mary Truesdale, Daniel Tur-  
covsky, Diane Turcovsky, Charlie Moore  
 Sun. Feb. 21-11:00 AM- Wendy Campbell, Dolores  
Capriotti, Patrick Podoletz, Mary Grace Horton

### SACRISTAN

Wed. Feb. 17 - 6:00 PM - NOT FILLED  
 Sat. Feb. 20 - 4:00 PM - Jane Byrne  
 Sun. Feb. 21 - 8:00 AM - Darlene Scarpaci  
 Sun. Feb. 21 - 11:00 AM - Dolores Capriotti

### SCRIP

Sat. Feb. 20 - 4:00 PM- Mary Haenig, Julie Beiswenger  
 Sun. Feb. 21 - 8:00 AM- Amber & Heather Yasolsky  
 Sun. Feb. 21 - 11:00 AM - Marge Rudolph,  
Peg Madden

## February Prayer Intention of Pope Francis

*Violence against women*

We pray for women who are victims of violence, that they may be protected by society and have their sufferings considered and heeded.



## A Few Words from the Pastor:

**VIRUS SAFETY** – All are encouraged to continue wearing masks for the celebration of Mass. The virus still rages in our country. All are also encouraged to “sign in” as you come enter the church, which allows us to do contact tracing. This allows us to connect with those who have attended a Mass where an infected person has been present. We have had to do that once. And always, our church is sanitized after each Mass.

**THE DISTRIBUTION OF ASHES, IN CHURCH AND AT HOME** – Our Masses for Ash Wednesday are at 8:30 AM and 6:00 PM. Because of the need for social distancing during the pandemic, the bishops have asked that those administering the ashes do so by placing a small amount on the top of one’s head. This is an ancient practice which is still practiced in Europe. For those who are hesitant to have ashes sprinkled on your head, we are making available small containers of ashes which you may take home, where you can administer the ashes to your family. An appropriate prayer card will be provided for the home celebration. These small containers of blessed ashes will be available throughout the day in the Gathering Space.

**MAKING THE MOST OF LENT** – Consider now how you might make the most of this important liturgical season. Stations of the Cross, Daily Mass, use of the Rice Bowls, contribution to our monthly food collection – all these are valuable ways to celebrate the season of Lent!

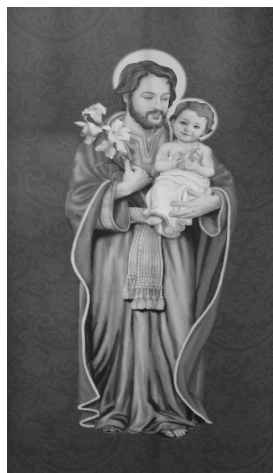
**CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD** – We had a very positive zoom meeting last week regarding our plans to move ahead with this program of catechesis for our children. We will begin with a focus on children ages 3 to 6. Consulting with us in this endeavor is Gaye Boyer, who for many years has been directing this program at St. Aloysius in Cresson. If you have an interest in learning more as a parent or perhaps a teacher, please contact the parish office. Another informational meeting will be held in early February.

**REFLECTIONS ON THE BEATITUDES** – I will continue with daily reflections on the eight Beatitudes, which some have considered to be the “Magna Carta” of the Christian life. Beginning then on Ash Wednesday, I will be reflecting upon the multiple questions which Jesus addresses to his followers.

**BIBLE STUDY ON WEDNESDAY EVENING** – All are most welcome to join our evening zoom Bible study. Because of my teaching schedule at St. Vincent’s, I have had to move this study to Wednesday evening. We will return to Tuesday in early May. Each week we take a careful look at the reading for the coming Sunday! If you would like to participate, please send us a copy of your email so that you will get the link for the meeting! We would love to have you!

**CONFIRMATION THIS SPRING** – Because of concerns regarding Covid-19, the bishop has instructed pastors to again schedule Confirmation in their own parish. We have set the date for Wednesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 PM. While we might miss the solemnity of having Confirmation in the Cathedral, there is a beautiful simplicity in celebrating in our home parish.

**THE YEAR OF SAINT JOSEPH** – To celebrate the 150th anniversary of Blessed Pope Pius IX’s declaration of St Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church, Pope Francis has proclaimed a special “Year of St Joseph,” beginning on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception 2020 and extending to the same feast in 2021. St. Joseph, pray for us! A banner is displayed in our church, reminding us of his place in our lives as patron of the Church.



### Prayer For The Year Of St. Joseph by Pope Francis

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

*To you God entrusted his only Son;*

*in you Mary placed her trust;*

*with you Christ became man.*

*Blessed Joseph, to us, too, show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life.*

*Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen.*

## FAITH FORMATION NEWS

**All students should pick up a Rice Bowl in the Gathering Space this week!**

**Sunday, February 21: 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Confirmation** combined Session on Scripture, Parables, and Gifts of the Spirit 9:00 AM in the Parish Center followed by Mass at 11:00 AM

**Sunday, February 28: 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Confirmation Session:** Morality 9:15 - 10:45 AM in the Parish Center

**Sunday, March 7: 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Confirmation Session:** Witness 9:15-10:45 AM in Parish Center

If you have any questions about Faith Formation, please contact Diane Ryan in the parish office at 942-5503 or by emailing [stjohnsecretary@atlanticbb.net](mailto:stjohnsecretary@atlanticbb.net).

**FAMILIES AND THE GOSPEL:** (Mark 1:40-45) Family life is about decisions. The leper in today's gospel knew this when he said to Jesus. "If you will, you can make me clean." Jesus knew this when He said, "I do will it." Love is not an emotion. It is a decision to be with and for another person in "good times and bad," even when we don't feel like it. *Reprinted with permission: A Family Perspective by Bud Ozar.*

**STEWARDSHIP CORNER:** Jesus' disciples and Christian stewards recognize God as the origin of life, giver of freedom, and source of all things. We are grateful for the gifts we have received and are eager to use them to show our love for God and for one another. We look to the life and teachings of Jesus for guidance in living as Christian stewards. Christian stewards and disciples strive to realize the ideal set forth by Saint Paul in today's second reading: "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God." (*To Be A Christian Steward, A Summary of the USCCB Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, July 1993, Washington D.C.*)

### January 31, 2021

Envelopes	\$ 4,458.00
Loose Offerings	\$ 599.00
Children's Offering	\$ 4.00
Catholic Education	\$ 25.00
Solemnity of Mary	\$ 20.00
Ash Wednesday	\$ 25.00
Black & Indian Mission	\$ 35.00
Food Bank Collection	\$ 215.00
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$ 5,381.00</i>
Online Giving	\$ 1,405.00
<b>Total Offertory</b>	<b>\$ 6,786.00</b>

### Restore\*Repair\*Rejoice

Payments/Donations	\$170,116
Pledge Payment Committed	14,573
Total Pledges/Donations	184,689

**2020 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS** will be available upon request. Please call the Parish Office at 814-942-5503 to request your giving statement. A contribution statement will not be mailed to you unless you call the office to request it. If you are registered with My Own Church, you can log in and download your statement yourself.

## ST JOHN'S PRAYER LIST

Please call Ginny Reeder (695-7671) or email her at [ginnny.reeder@gmail.com](mailto:ginnny.reeder@gmail.com) to add or remove someone from the prayer list. PLEASE PRAY FOR THE FOLLOWING and their caregivers and give thanks for those who have recovered. *Lord we ask for your blessings and care for these and all people in need:*

Aiden • Cari Ann • Amy B. • Scott Brenneman  
Dan Burley • Robert Cole • Michelle Cooney  
Betty Dennis • Jim DeStefano • Michael DeStefano  
Bernadine Farrell • Kathy Felty • Mary Ann Flinn  
Leann Frazier • Molly Grenfell • Ken Hartman  
Denny Horton • Randy Horton • Alexandra Hudson  
Mary Jo Ivory • Amy Langenbacher • Lisa  
Sherri Maffettone • Camden Michael • Susie Miller  
Sylvia Louise Mills • Barbara Moore • Ailani Myers  
Patricia Olson • Mary Oricko • Linda Pletcher  
Ron Peschock • Connie R. • Mary Rajnish  
Allison Recker • Vicki Riley • Allison Ritchey  
Olga Romerowicz • Mike Rudolph • Bruce Shank  
Anne Showalter • Tim Temofonte • Bill Teufel  
Kathy Wagner • Lois Werfel • Len Whitten  
Milan & Family

*Please respect the person's right to privacy and secure permission before placing a name on the Prayer List.*

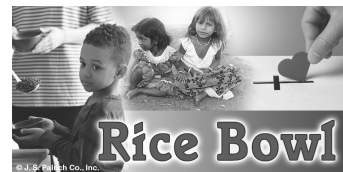
When a person recovers, please call the office and have their name removed from the list.

**FASTING AND ABSTINENCE IN LENT:** Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are obligatory days of fasting and abstinence for Catholics. In addition, Fridays during Lent are obligatory days of abstinence. For members of the Latin Catholic Church, the norms on fasting are obligatory from age 18 until age 59. When fasting, a person is permitted to eat one full meal. Two smaller meals may also be taken, but not to equal a full meal. The norms concerning abstinence from meat are binding upon members of the Latin Catholic Church from age 14 onwards.

### OPERATION RICE BOWL:

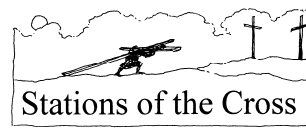
Join our faith community—and more than 12,000 Catholic communities across the United States—in a life-

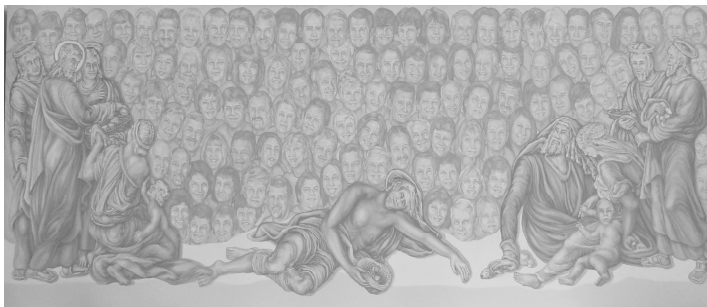
changing Lenten journey with CRS Rice Bowl. Pick up your family's CRS Rice Bowl in the Gathering Space. During the 40 days of Lent, we will reflect on how hunger and malnutrition affect our human family, and on the need to take action to end this global injustice. Visit [crsricebowl.org](http://crsricebowl.org) to learn more.



**STATIONS OF THE CROSS:** Beginning this Friday, Stations of the Cross are observed each Friday of Lent at 7:00 PM.

Mark your calendar, and make a mental note to walk in the steps of Jesus this Lent.





**THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES AND FISH:** When Allen Capriotti started this mural, he decided to use the faces of parishioners, so he scanned photos from the two parish directories he had, scaled the photos and made a drawing on tracing paper. He completed 700 drawings and used about 200 of them in the mural. He has now decided to gift each parishioner with the tracing of themselves to keep. There is a box in the Gathering Space with these tracings, signed by Allen, and attached to the original photo from the directory. You are welcome to take your photo and drawing. Please check your name off of the master list beside the box, along with the names of any others you take. If you are a relative, friend or neighbor and can help us by delivering or sending them their drawing, please let us know. Hopefully we can get these drawings to all of the people on the list. If you are not currently attending Mass and would like to know if we have a drawing of you or a family member, please contact Deborah Johnson at dj219@msn.com or in the Parish Office - 814-942-5503.

**ICF NEWSLETTER:** We have received the winter newsletter from the Independent Catholic Foundation, which is dedicated to providing long-term income to parishes, schools, cemeteries and ministries through the diocese. The newsletters are in the Gathering Space. If you can not pick up a copy, you may request one by calling the Foundation at (814)201-2080, or you can read the newsletter online from the "Resources" tab at [www.icfdaj.org](http://www.icfdaj.org).

**CARD MINISTRY:** Please continue sending cards to those on our prayer list. The names are in the bulletin and most addresses are in the directory. Anyone wishing to send cards, even if you have not previously signed up for a particular person, would be most welcome. Please call Ginny (695-7671) or the office (942-5503) to obtain/verify the address. Receiving a card in these winter months would certainly be nice, especially for someone who cannot go out and is stuck inside.



Sixth Sunday  
in Ordinary Time  
February 14, 2021

Whether you eat or drink,  
or whatever you do,  
do everything for the glory of God.

— 1 Corinthians 10:31

## Schedule for the Week

### Sunday, February 14 – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

8:00 AM - Mass for *Ida Prosperi* requested by John Prosperi  
11:00 AM - Mass for *Rose Villani Ryan* requested by Jeannie & Steve Shirk  
12:30 PM - Communion in the Front Circle

### Monday, February 15 – Weekday

6:00 PM - Mass for *Mary Jo Sibert* requested by Larry & Carol Field

### Tuesday, February 16 – Weekday

8:30 AM - Mass for *Kevin Canole* requested by Michele & Lance DeFrancisco

### Wednesday, February 17 – Ash Wednesday

8:30 AM Mass for *Irene Becker* requested by Ron & Bonnie Smith  
5:30 PM - Confessions  
6:00 PM - Mass for *Joseph Miller* requested by David & Melanie Lee

### Thursday, February 18 – Thursday After Ash Wednesday

8:30 AM - Mass for *James Duffy* requested by Bill & Judy Ward & Family

### Friday, February 19 – Friday After Ash Wednesday

8:30 AM - Mass for *James Watkins* requested by Richard & Joyce Lowe  
7:00 PM - Stations of the Cross

### Saturday, February 20 - Vigil of the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent

3:00 PM - Confessions  
4:00 PM - Mass for *Joan Litzinger* requested by Janice Fogel & Family

### Sunday, February 21 – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent

8:00 AM - Mass for *People of the Parish*  
11:00 AM - Mass for *Andrew Dancha* requested by Frank & Nancy Mincin  
12:30 PM - Communion in the Front Circle

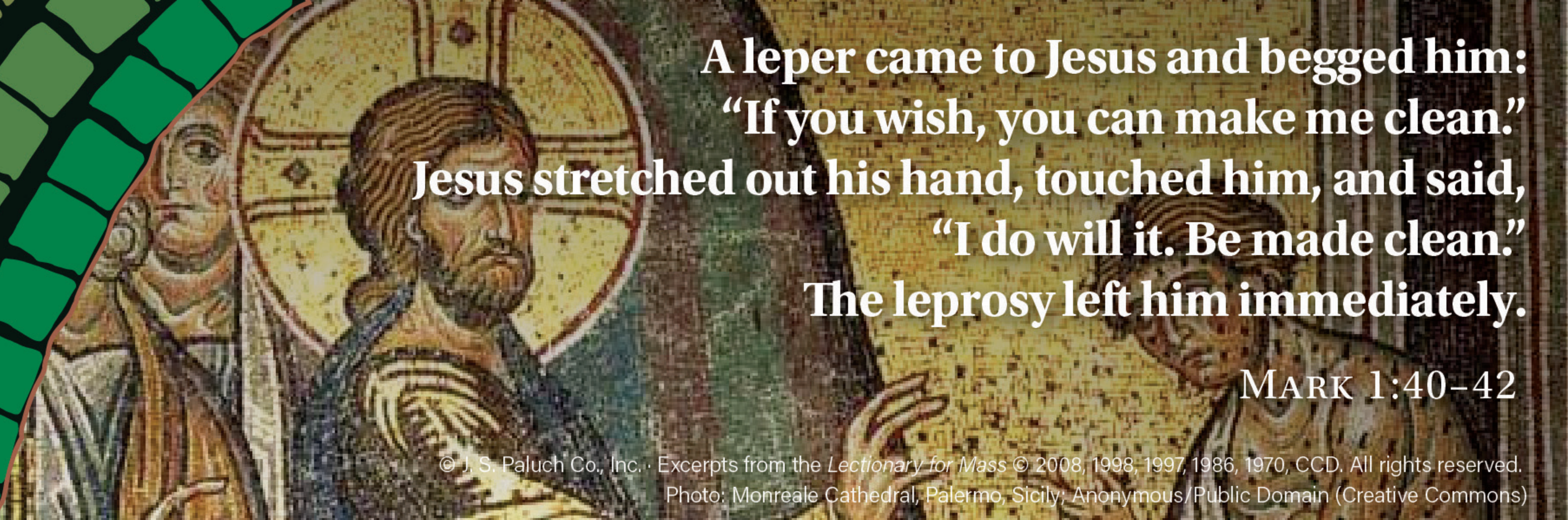
## READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Monday: Gn 4:1-15, 25; Ps 50:1, 8, 16bc-17, 20-21; Mk 8:11-13  
Tuesday: Gn 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 10; Ps 29:1a, 2, 3ac-4, 3b, 9c-10; Mk 8:14-21  
Wednesday: Jl 2:12-18; Ps 51:3-6ab, 12-14, 17; 2 Cor 5:20 — 6:2; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18  
Thursday: Dt 30:15-20; Ps 1:1-4, 6; Lk 9:22-25  
Friday: Is 58:1-9a; Ps 51:3-6ab, 18-19; Mt 9:14-15  
Saturday: Is 58:9b-14; Ps 86:1-6; Lk 5:27-32  
Sunday: Gn 9:8-15; Ps 25:4-9; 1 Pt 3:18-22; Mk 1:12-15



# SIXTH Sunday in ORDINARY TIME

February 14, 2021



**A leper came to Jesus and begged him:  
“If you wish, you can make me clean.”  
Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said,  
“I do will it. Be made clean.”  
The leprosy left him immediately.**

**MARK 1:40–42**

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Photo: Monreale Cathedral, Palermo, Sicily; Anonymous/Public Domain (Creative Commons)

## HEALING AND HOPE

The readings from Leviticus and from the Gospel of Mark today speak of healing and hope. Leviticus outlines procedures to prevent the spread of leprosy, a skin disease understood to be a great danger to the community. Those with the disease were isolated and ritually impure. Absent some cure from God, they were considered beyond hope. Their lives were like a living death, and likely they saw no future hope in their lives. Jesus’ healing of a leper was thus a profound sign of the promised reign of God, which Jesus had earlier announced. The healing was like raising the leper up from death, and thus a hint of Jesus’ resurrection. Where are there “lepers” today, those isolated or outcast from our communities? Who are those our society considers beyond hope, or deems not worth the trouble to offer hope? How can we imitate Jesus in offering a healing touch to them?

## SURRENDERING CONTROL

The Gospel today concludes the first chapter of Mark, which traces the rapid expansion of Jesus’ ministry. Excitement about Jesus grows so much that he can’t enter a town without being besieged. His healing of a leper results in a reversal: the leper, who had been isolated from the community, is now free to speak with everyone. Jesus, who before could speak freely, now must isolate himself from the crowds. By serving others, Jesus lost some control over his ministry. This is the first hint of what happens later in Mark. Jesus’ displays of power—over illness, over evil spirits, over nature—eventually lead him to the “powerlessness” of the cross.

The experience of Jesus guides us in our own efforts to be of service. Surrendering control is often very difficult. To be a servant is to engage with others, where frequently we lose some control over our freedoms, time, and energies. Often there is a cross or two to bear. As Jesus let go of control in his life, he also placed his trust in his Father. He invites us to do the same.

## FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

In today’s passage from First Corinthians, Paul concludes his extensive reflections on a variety of issues in Christian life, summarizing with “whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” Beyond the specific problems he addresses, Paul invites his listeners deeper, to consider the primary orientation of life in Christ. We live “for the glory of God” when we organize our lives around God’s values and purposes. We find our identity within God’s story as described in the scriptures. We are called to join God’s work in care for others. Just like Paul, we wrestle with many difficult problems emerging from the messiness of daily living. As Lent approaches, we might claim some time to reflect upon how life’s messiness connects with our identity and calling.

## TODAY’S READINGS

Leviticus 13:1–2, 44–46

Psalms 32:1–2, 5, 11

1 Corinthians 10:31 — 11:1

Mark 1:40–45



# God's Word for Children



Jesus healed a man with a terrible disease called leprosy.

Jesus told him not to tell anyone.

But the man spread the news about it anyway.

Count the number of times this man has shouted, "Healed!"

Then write that number inside the bandage roll at the bottom.



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## Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Paul told the Corinthians something we need to keep in mind for our everyday living.

To find out what it was, use the number code provided.

Some letters have already been written in.

If you need help, read 1 Corinthians 10:31 in your Bible.

15=Y	4=G	1=V	18=D	13=N
7=I	10=E	19=L	2=R	11=T
	20=H	12=F	9=O	

D    9    10    1    10    2    15    11    20    7    13    4

12    9    R    11    20    10

4    19    9    2    15    9    12    G    9    18 !



"Be made clean." Mark 1 : 41



## WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART

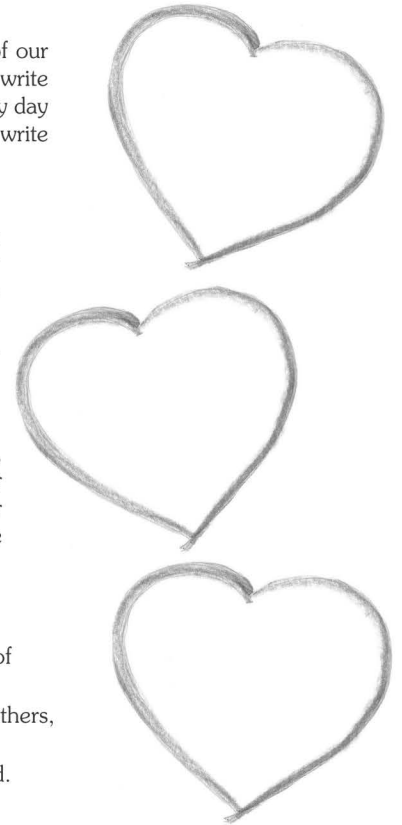
This week we celebrate both Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday. It might seem a strange combination of celebrations, but perhaps they are not so different after all. Valentine's Day is about sending messages of love to people who are dear to us. In a way, Ash Wednesday gives us different examples of how to show love for God by loving our sisters and brothers.

The Gospel for Ash Wednesday tells us that one of our Lenten practices should be prayer. In the first heart, write the name or words of a prayer that you can pray every day during Lent to show how much you love God. You can write a prayer using your own words, too.

Another Lenten practice is fasting, or doing without something, so that you can have more time or resources to give to others. In the second heart, write one thing you will promise to give up or do this Lent. What will you do with the extra time or money you have as a result? How will your action help another?

The third Lenten practice is almsgiving, that is, giving to the poor some of your time, talent, or money. Discuss with your family which person or group most needs your help. In the third heart, write your goal for giving aid to this person or group.

When Wednesday comes, you might think of Ash Wednesday as the start of a time when you can show your love for God and for others, not only on Valentine's Day but throughout the days of Lent and beyond.





## Our Pledge to Protect Vulnerable Adults

By Judge Kate Huffman

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**Editor's Note:** The VIRTUS Programs began over twenty years ago to establish a program to safeguard children and the vulnerable from sexual abuse. In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Charter)*, which remains the guiding document for all dioceses within the U.S. today. *While the Charter gives dioceses a baseline on how to address protecting the vulnerable within ministry, it is part of our mission as caring adults to protect all of the vulnerable. This article provides ways that caring adults may provide care and protection for the vulnerable in any environment.*

### Article:

It is our responsibility as caring adults to protect all of the vulnerable from abuse and other harm—which includes protecting children and vulnerable adults. The subject is complex, but, much of what we know about the abuse of children can also apply to the abuse of vulnerable adults. This also helps us know how to prevent it and respond appropriately if it occurs.

### Who is considered a vulnerable adult?

Pope Francis recently defined the phrase of “vulnerable adults” as those who are “in an infirm state, of physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal freedom,” the condition of which, whether consistently or occasionally, “limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist” offenses against them.<sup>1</sup> The [\*Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People \(Charter\)\*](#)<sup>2</sup> details the commitment of the Catholic Church in the United States to safeguard minors from sexual abuse, and also has given a brief definition of a vulnerable adult: as persons who “habitually lack the use of reason,” although this definition is limited and does not fully encompass the complex vulnerabilities experienced by adults.

Many dioceses have gone beyond that definition in implementing safe environment policies. Whether you are an employee or a volunteer in a ministry not involving vulnerable adults, there may still be a policy that requires your attention and action involving protecting vulnerable adults, just as it does with children. Some dioceses utilize the definition of a vulnerable adult provided in the jurisdiction's civil law,<sup>3</sup> while

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis issues new interpretation of the term in *Motu Proprio*. 2019. May be accessed online at: [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20190507\\_vos-estis-lux-mundi.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20190507_vos-estis-lux-mundi.html)

<sup>2</sup> The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. <https://www.usccb.org/offices/child-and-youth-protection/charter-protection-children-and-young-people>

<sup>3</sup> The definition of a vulnerable adult should not be confused with “elder abuse,” as maltreatment of individuals over the age of 60 refers to acts whereby a trusted person, including caregivers, causes or creates risk of harm to an older adult. See J. Hall, D.L. Larch, and A. Crosby, *Elder Abuse Surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Core Data Elements for Use in Elder Abuse Surveillance*, Version 1.0, Atlanta, Ga: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016.





others formulate broad and inclusive interpretations of the term and provisions for their policies.

While some elderly people may be considered vulnerable adults, the reality is much broader and more inclusive. Consider, for example, Peter, age 34, who obtained an advanced college degree and works full-time. Born with cerebral palsy, Peter struggles with his mobility, and could not defend or protect himself against many forms of physical harm. Although Peter is young and easily cares for his own financial, daily living and other needs, he does have a physical vulnerability that warrants additional protections.

## **Risk of abuse**

A staggering number of adult U.S. residents experience a disability or age-related concern that can create the potential for abuse. One in four Americans (61 million) experience a disability affecting one or more major life activities. As of 2019, more than 54 million U.S. residents were aged 65 or older. The risk of abuse rises among vulnerable adults, as compared to the general population. Elderly individuals living in care facilities are at an increased risk of sexual abuse, although, similar to child sexual abuse, victimization increases significantly among persons with disabilities, particularly developmental challenges and intellectual impairments.<sup>4</sup>

The elevated risk of abuse among the vulnerable adult population likely stems from dependence on others for personal care, a potential inability to communicate with others and the imbalance of power existing between the caregiver and their client.<sup>5</sup> Offenders who mistreat adults—whether through sexual or physical abuse, or financial exploitation—engage in grooming behavior designed to develop the trust and access necessary for the opportunity to abuse. As with children, sexual victimization remains significantly underreported in the elderly and disabled populations.<sup>6</sup> Sexual abuse of vulnerable adults represents only about 1% of maltreatment reported and substantiated in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Abuse of the vulnerable encompasses a complex and multidimensional concern. The vulnerabilities experienced—and the variety of abuse—complicate the recognition and prevention of misconduct. A trusting relationship between the perpetrator and the victim presents an opportunistic factor contributing to abuse. In fact, the victim is known to the abuser in some type of pre-existing non-romantic relationship in 87% of incidents

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<sup>4</sup> D. Sobsey and T. Doe, *Patterns of Sexual Abuse and Assault*, 9 Sex Disabil. 243 (1991).

<sup>5</sup> See Leila B. Cooke and Valerie Sinason, *Abuse of People with Learning Disabilities and Other Vulnerable Adults*, 4 J. Cont. Prof. Dev. 119 (1998).

<sup>6</sup> See Diana C. Schneider, M.D. and Xian Li, M.D., *Sexual Abuse of Vulnerable Adults: The Medical Director's Response*, J. Amer. Med. Dir. Assoc. 442 (Sept. 2006).

<sup>7</sup> P.B. Teaster, et al., *A Response to the Abuse of Vulnerable Adults: The 2000 Survey of State Adult Protective A Services*. Washington, D.C., National Center on Elder Abuse (2003).



involving individuals with learning disabilities. A recent study found that 99% of elderly Americans are at risk of financial abuse and scams.<sup>8</sup>

### **Acts of abuse toward the vulnerable**

The potential forms of abuse experienced by adults, in many respects, mirrors that suffered by children. Synthesized to its most basic element, the opportunity to abuse generally emanates from what begins, for the victim—adult or child—as a trusting or dependent relationship. Irrespective of a particular or specific vulnerability, children and adults alike are victims of abuse by way of emotional or psychological maltreatment, neglect and sexual abuse, and physical violence. Abuse may occur in a domestic setting, including in the adult's home, in an institutional setting, such as a care facility, in the community, or through technology.

Any form of hitting, pushing, shaking, choking, or burning, as well as physical restraint, constitutes physical abuse. Emotional or psychological abuse includes insults, threats, intimidation, and humiliation of any form, as well as isolation from family, friends, loved ones and activities. Neglect manifests in the failure to provide for basic needs, including nutrition, shelter, and medical care. Abuse may also involve self-neglect, particularly where caregivers fail to encourage or support appropriate self-care.

Sexual abuse encompasses any unwanted or non-consensual touching, exploitation, and the myriad of electronic forms of abuse, such as sexting, the use, creation or sharing of sexually explicit and/or violent images, and any communication intended to solicit sexual activity.

Unlike children, adults may experience financial abuse by loved ones, trusted acquaintances, and caregivers. This may include some element of fear utilized to gain access to the adult's assets. Financial exploitation typically involves the development or manipulation of the adult's trust in order to obtain access to bank accounts, jewelry and other valuable assets. Financial exploitation can also involve the encouragement and/or direction to change documents, including wills, bank account ownership, or to transfer funds for "safekeeping." Schemes to defraud often target the elderly, relying on a position of trust, usually pretending to be a government or law-enforcement official to extract money.

### **Recognizing signs of abuse in vulnerable adults**

Financial abuse directed toward vulnerable adults may manifest in sudden or unexplained changes in behavior, a recently introduced acquaintance who has acquired a trusting relationship with the vulnerable adult, isolation from family or friends, or an

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<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth A. Richards, *Stop the Silence of Elder Abuse*, Am. Nurse Today (Aug. 2011), <http://www.americanursetoday.com/article.aspx?id=8112>; see also Taylor Lemick, *Society's Response to the "Invisible" Abuse of Elders: Understanding and Addressing the Financial Abuse of Society's Most Vulnerable Citizens*, 23 Elder L.J.151 (2015).



unexpected alteration to the adult's lifestyle or finances. Additional red flags include large and unexplained withdrawals from bank accounts, or a seeming inability to provide for basic financial obligations, particularly when the adult previously could meet those needs. Moreover, missing valuables, such as electronic devices and jewelry, should be a warning sign requiring further inquiry.

Physical signs of maltreatment may be obvious—such as bruises, cuts, burns and broken bones, but other signs of abuse can be more subtle. Although research demonstrates that sexual abuse among vulnerable adults represents a less frequent form of maltreatment than physical or financial abuse, this still occurs. Warning signs of sexual exploitation include behavior changes such as withdrawal or confusion, fear of a certain individual, bruising in erogenous areas, incontinence, and unexplained genital or other sexually transmitted infections. Watch for the tell-tale signs of neglect of a vulnerable adult, including dehydration or malnutrition, missing or unused medications, and cleanliness concerns, whether personal hygiene or the adult's living environment.

### **Taking action**

We all have an obligation to protect the vulnerable. Similar to how we protect children, if you see any sign of abuse in a vulnerable adult, you must communicate your concerns to the appropriate authorities.

Possible signs of abuse:

- Changes in behavior
- Changes to weight or overall health
- Bruising, abrasions, broken bones and other physical injuries
- Unexplained change in financial circumstances or assets
- Modifications in personal hygiene
- Recent anxiety, anger, depression and confusion
- Fear or avoidance of specific persons
- Isolation from family or loved ones

Absolute certainty that abuse has occurred is rare; if you observe any signs of maltreatment or have concerns about the welfare of a vulnerable adult, err on the side of caution and report the suspected abuse. Immediately contact your local Adult Protective Services Agency (<https://www.napsa-now.org/get-help/help-in-your-area/>) to report your suspicion of abuse, or reach out to a local law enforcement agency. As with any suspected abuse, waiting to be absolutely certain that maltreatment has occurred may place the vulnerable in further jeopardy.





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