



**MARCH 21, 2021**

*Unless a grain of wheat falls  
to the ground and dies,  
it remains just a grain of wheat;  
but if it dies, it produces much fruit.*

*John 12:24*

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

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**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**

Sat. Mar. 27 - 4:00 PM - Heather Nackley, NOT  
FILLED, Barb Aubrey

Sun. Mar. 28 - 8:00 AM - NOT FILLED, Joyce Cunningham,  
Darlene Scarpaci

Sun. Mar. 28-11:00 AM -Jim Campbell, Gary Johnson,  
Patrick Schurr

**ALTAR SERVERS**

Sat. Mar. 27- 4:00 PM- Keaton Swope, Ryan Donoughe

Sun. Mar. 28 -8:00 AM - Ethan Miller, Emily Miller

Sun. Mar. 28 - 11:00 AM - NOT FILLED, NOT FILLED

**EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS**

Sat. Mar. 27 - 4:00 PM - Connie Baker

Sun. Mar. 28 - 8:00 AM - Darlene Scarpaci

Sun. Mar. 28 - 11:00 AM - Bob Olson, Barbara Bundy,  
Dolores Capriotti

**MINISTERS OF HOSPITALITY**

Sat. Mar. 27 - 4:00 PM - Judy Sneath, Betsy Lloyd,  
Larry Van Sickle, NOT FILLED

Sun. Mar. 28- 8:00 AM - Jane Becker, John Becker,  
Daniel Turcovsky, Diane Turcovsky

Sun. Mar. 28-11:00 AM - Walter Bloom, Lou Ann  
Clark, Peg Madden, Wendy Campbell

**SACRISTAN**

Sat. Mar. 27 - 4:00 PM - Jane Byrne

Sun. Mar. 28 - 8:00 AM - Darlene Scarpaci

Sun. Mar. 28 - 11:00 AM - Barbara Bundy

**SCRIP**

Sat. Mar. 27 - 4:00 PM- Becky Merilli, Julie Beiswenger

Sun. Mar. 28- 8:00 AM- Erika & Heather Yasolsky

Sun. Mar. 28-11:00 AM- Peg Madden, Marge Rudolph

**FIFTH**  
**SUNDAY OF**

*Year of*  
**ST. JOSEPH**



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## A Few Words from the Pastor:

### **CATHOLIC MINISTRIES DRIVE – BE A DISCIPLE OF HOPE!**

Your sacrificial gifts of prayer and treasure will make an immediate impact on ministries that care for the poor, strengthen family life, nurture our youth, and provide leadership development for clergy and laity. During Lent, and throughout the year, we are challenged to renew our spiritual devotions and duties – and one of those holy duties is to support the Church. We are challenged to open our eyes and see those in our midst that bring hope to life through their time and talent in serving the community through the 14 ministries supported by the Catholic Ministries Drive. You may make an online gift at [www.dioceseaj.org/giving](http://www.dioceseaj.org/giving). 100% of your gift goes directly to these ministries! *Our Parish Goal is \$42,813.*

**HOLY WEEK BEGINS!** Next Sunday we celebrate Palm Sunday, beginning the holiest week of the church year. All are encouraged to make an effort to attend Mass, participating in this journey which we make with Jesus to Mount Calvary. Should we have an overflow crowd, we will have additional seats available in the Gathering Space. We remain required to wear masks and to social distancing.

**HIGH SCHOOL FAITH FORMATION AND THE TRIDUUM -** Because the sacred Triduum, The Holy Three Days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, are the high point of our church year, we are requiring that annually our teens participate in one of these three Great Days. It is our hope that in their three years of preparation for Confirmation, they will have experienced all three of these most sacred celebrations! Indeed, everyone is urged to pray with us at the Lord's Supper, Mount Calvary, and at the Empty Tomb!

**A PRAYER CANDLE FOR EASTER -** We will be making available this Easter small votive candles which will remind us during the Easter season of Christ's presence as the Light of the World. They can be a small reminder of the beauty of the Easter candle, and can be placed next to an icon or crucifix. They can be lit at Easter dinner or anytime a person praying privately, aware that it is Christ who is our Light.

**THE QUESTIONS JESUS ASKS! –** Throughout the season of Lent, my daily online reflection will consider the dozens of questions which Jesus asks his followers! In the gospels he addresses questions to individuals, to his apostles, and to the crowds. We read the gospels and consider that Jesus is asking each of those questions to you and to me, as individuals!

**THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION -** Each time we say the Hail Mary, we are remembering that marvelous moment when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary announcing that she was to be the mother of our Redeemer. Most often, this feast falls during the season of Lent. It is celebrated on 25 March each year. In the Roman Catholic Church, should 25 March falls during the Paschal Triduum, it is transferred forward to the first suitable day during Eastertide. Interestingly, in Eastern Orthodoxy and Eastern Catholicism, it is never transferred, even if it falls on Pascha. This year it is observed this Thursday! Please plan on joining us for this great Solemnity.

**CONFESSIONS IN LENT -** All are encouraged to take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation during the Lenten season. Repentance is at the heart of the Lenten message. Please note that in addition to the usual scheduled time for confession (Wednesday at 5:30 and Saturday at 3 PM), I will be available after each weekend Mass from now until the Palm Sunday! The celebration of the Sacrament of Penance is our sharing in the mystery of Christ's redeeming death and resurrection.

**FRIDAY EVENING STATIONS -** The Stations of the Cross or the Way of the Cross, also known as the Way of Sorrows or the *Via Crucis*. The stations grew out of imitations of Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem which is believed to be the actual path Jesus walked to Mount Calvary. We pray the stations to help us make a spiritual pilgrimage through contemplation of the Passion of Christ. Stations are scheduled weekly on the Fridays of Lent. Please join us.

**BIBLE STUDY ON WEDNESDAY EVENING -** All are most welcome to join our evening zoom Bible study. Each week we take a careful look at the readings 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!

**LENTEN FOOD COLLECTION –** Our parish has been exceptionally generous with our Second Sunday food collection. For the Lenten season, let's make every Sunday a food collection Sunday, given the struggles which many families are facing in light of the pandemic and the economic downturn. Given the upcoming closing of the paper mill in Roaring Spring, we will explore ways that we might expand our reach to the 300 families affected by the expected layoffs.

## **FAITH FORMATION NEWS**

**Sunday, March 21: 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Rite of Sending and Discipleship Retreat**

**Confirmation Mass - Wednesday, April 14 @ 7:00 PM**

**First Communion Mass - Sunday, April 25 @ 11:00 AM**

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).

**VIRTUS ARTICLE:** Each month, the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese provides one educational article provided by VIRTUS® covering topics of interest to create awareness on trending topics. March's featured article is: March's featured article is: 'Law Enforcement and Child Abuse Allegations' by Robert Hugh Farley MS. This article is posted on the kiosk in the Gathering Space and attached to our online March 21 bulletin.



**EASTER FLOWERS:** All memorial donations for Easter flowers should be submitted by Friday, March 26, to be included in our April 4 bulletin insert.

**STEWARDSHIP CORNER:** You are like a grain of wheat. Keeping your time, talent, and treasure to yourself yields no harvest. With God's grace we can die to ourselves and bear fruit for His kingdom. When you live for others, the evangelizing mission of Jesus Christ is revealed. Is God calling you to be charitable in a specific way this week? We are called to detach from our own desires and entrust our lives to all that God has in store for us. As this Lenten season comes to a close, let us strive to partake in the richness God has offered to us through his covenant by more faithfully living out our call to be disciples of Christ, with frequent reception of the sacraments, and heartfelt service to our families and neighbors.

*(Stewardship Bulletin Reflection, Catholic Stewardship Consultants, February 22, 2021)*

### **March 7, 2021**

Envelopes	\$ 4,335.00
Loose Offerings	\$ 407.00
Catholic Education	\$ 135.00
Easter Flower Offering	\$ 180.00
Catholic Relief Services	\$ 110.00
Food Bank Collection	\$ 200.00
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 5,367.00</b>
Online Giving	\$ 3,465.00
<b>Total Offertory</b>	<b>\$ 8,832.00</b>

### **Restore\*Repair\*Rejoice**

Payments/Donations \$170,995

Pledge Payment Committed \$14,224

Total Pledges/Donations \$185,219

2021 Catholic Ministries Drive Goal - \$42,813.

**2020 CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS** Please call the Parish Office at 814-942-5503 to request your statement.

## **ST JOHN'S PRAYER LIST**

Please call Ginny Reeder (695-7671) or email her at [ginny.reeder@gmail.com](mailto:ginny.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  
Jim DeStefano • Michael DeStefano • Bernadine Farrell  
Kathy Felty • Leann Frazier • Molly Grenfell  
Ken Hartman • 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**

### **HOME WITH THE LORD**

Your prayers are requested for the repose of the soul of:  
**Joseph Louis Saad, Sr.** - son of Bonnie Saad Stevens  
*May he rest in the peace and joy of the Lord.*

**ATTENTION ALL WOMEN OF ST. JOHN'S PARISH:** You are invited to join our Women's Outreach Group, if you have not already done so. This is a unique club - no dues, no meetings, no official titles, no agenda! WE HELP. Yes, we offer support to the parish, to individuals or families in the parish & community. When we learn of a need, an email is sent to you giving all details. You may agree to help by replying to the email. No pressure to respond to every need. Some of the programs/support we have assisted: Toasty Toddlers, Teen Shelter, baking or helping out with various events in the parish, gardening or yard work - to name a few. Also, we like to socialize with each other, so we may schedule an outing/lunch/dinner (Bell Mansion Tea House was a favorite). If you'd like to become a member, please contact the office, Barb Bundy, Ginny Reeder or Deb Johnson. We hope you will join us!

**ADDITIONAL VIDEOS AVAILABLE FOR LENT:** If you would like to find out where and how integral the Mass is to the Scriptures; Dr. Scott Hahn at the St Paul Center for Biblical Theology is offering a FREE course during Lent called: Parousia: The Bible and the Mass. Type this title into your browser, then click the link to St. Paul Center that comes up. From the Genesis to the Heavenly Liturgy in the Book of Revelation, this course will help you to see the connections and strengthen your faith in the New Covenant which is celebrated daily in the Mass.

Once you have logged on to the site, be sure to bookmark [StPaulCenter.com/streaming](http://StPaulCenter.com/streaming) for easy access to each subsequent lesson.

**RICE BOWL: COMMUNITY IN MADAGASCAR** Poor nutrition can lead to devastating long term consequences for individuals, communities and entire countries. That's why communities must work together to ensure that all children have access to better food and nutrition. New planting and cooking techniques are helping many communities in Madagascar improve the health and wellbeing of their children. How does your community work together for the good of others? Visit [crsricebowl.org](http://crsricebowl.org) to learn more.

**FAMILIES AND THE GOSPEL:** (John 12:20-33)

Relationships come with a price tag. We must be willing to entrust ourselves to another, to let go of our autonomy and die to our independence. It is in dying to our independence that we find interdependence with others. *Reprinted with permission: A Family Perspective by Bud Ozar.*

**EARLY BULLETIN DEADLINES:** All bulletin notes for the March 28 (Palm Sunday) bulletin are due on Thursday, March 18. Bulletin notes for the April 4 (Easter) bulletin are due on Thursday, March 25. Memorial donations for Easter flowers should be submitted by Friday, March 26.

**March Prayer Intention of Pope Francis  
Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Let us pray that we may experience the sacrament of reconciliation with renewed depth, to taste the infinite mercy of God.



**VIRTUS AWARENESS ARTICLE:** Each month, the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese provides one educational article provided by VIRTUS® covering topics of interest to create awareness on trending topics. March's featured article is: March's featured article is: 'Law Enforcement and Child Abuse Allegations' by Robert Hugh Farley MS. This article is posted on the kiosk in the Gathering Space and attached to our online March 21 bulletin.

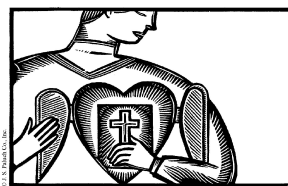
**FRIDAY TAKEOUT FISH LUNCH/DINNERS:**

**Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament:** Drive-thru fish lunch every Friday, except Good Friday, 11:00 AM – 1:30 PM  
Cost: \$9

**St. Therese of the Child Jesus:** Curbside takeout only, phone or curbside orders Fridays 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM (or until sold out) – Cost: \$10

**St. Patrick:** Seafood: \*Drive Thru Only\* Meals will be available for purchase in the school parking lot every Friday in Lent, including Good Friday, from 4pm until meals are sold out.

**Utter Uns:** 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM or until sold out; You do not have to be a member of the Utter Uns to attend. Diners will be available for take out; limited seating is available due to Covid-19 limitations. Cost: \$10.00 for adults, \$5.00 for children under 10.



**Fifth Sunday of Lent  
March 21, 2021**

I will place my law within them  
and write it upon their hearts;  
I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.

— Jeremiah 31:33

**Schedule for the Week**

**Sunday, March 21 – 5<sup>th</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

**Monday, March 22 – Lenten Weekday**

6:00 PM - Mass for *James Scot* requested by Richard & Joyce Lowe

**Tuesday, March 23 – Lenten Weekday**

8:30 AM - Mass for *Dolores Shellenbarger* requested by Mary Ann Fochler

**Wednesday, March 24 – Lenten Weekday**

5:30 PM - Confessions  
6:00 PM - Mass for *Helen Fornwalt* requested by Michelle, Chris & Christian Strawmier

**Thursday, March 25 – Annunciation of the Lord**

8:30 AM - Mass for *Jude Wargo* requested by Lance & Michele DeFrancisco

**Friday, March 26 – Lenten Weekday**

8:30 AM - Mass for *Carol Bismark* requested by Dee Schmerbeck  
7:00 PM - Stations of the Cross

**Saturday, March 27 - Vigil of Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord**

3:00 PM - Confessions  
4:00 PM - Mass for *People of the Parish*

**Sunday, March 28 – Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord**

8:00 AM - Mass for *David Ganz* requested by Bob & Ginny Reeder  
11:00 AM - Mass for *Nicholas Podoletz* requested by Richard & Joyce Lowe  
12:30 PM - Communion in the Front Circle

**READINGS FOR THE WEEK**

Monday: Dn 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 [41c-62];  
Ps 23:1-6; Jn 8:1-11  
Tuesday: Nm 21:4-9; Ps 102:2-3, 16-21; Jn 8:21-30  
Wednesday: Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Dn 3:52-56;  
Jn 8:31-42  
Thursday: Is 7:10-14; 8:10; Ps 40:7-11; Heb 10:4-10;  
Lk 1:26-38  
Friday: Jer 20:10-13; Ps 18:2-7; Jn 10:31-42  
Saturday: Ez 37:21-28; Jer 31:10, 11-13; Jn 11:45-56  
Sunday: Mk 11:1-10 or Jn 12:12-16 (procession); Is 50:4-7;  
Ps 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24; Phil 2:6-11; Mk 14:1 – 15:47



I will place my law within them  
and write it upon their hearts;  
I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.

JEREMIAH 31:33



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Photo: St. Nicholas Cathedral, Galway, Ireland; Ric Ergenbright and Danita Delimont/Adobe Stock.

## THROUGH SUFFERING

The prophet Jeremiah, in today's first reading, is looking beyond the often-messy history of Israel and Judah to a time when the people will no longer be disobedient to God, because God's law will be "written on their hearts"—that is, their natural inclinations and desires will be oriented toward God's will. The psalmist gives voice to the sorrow that Israel and Judah experienced in their separation from God "Have mercy on me, O God . . . A clean heart create for me." According to Saint Paul, the earthly Jesus, "son though he was," like his ethnic ancestors, he "learned obedience from what he suffered." The Gospel reading is part of Jesus' discourses not long before the Last Supper. Instead of a social encounter with Philip's friends who had come to see him, Jesus is grappling with his approaching death and its ultimate meaning for the world.

### JEREMIAH: LOOKING BEYOND EXILE AND SUFFERING

The readings today remind us how close we are to Easter—only two weeks from now. They also remind us that the path to resurrection and Easter always includes suffering and death. The prophet Jeremiah spent his whole life proclaiming the word of God to kings who would not listen. As an old man, he saw Jerusalem defeated and the inhabitants taken into exile. Jeremiah himself suffered in being left behind, but in today's reading, he is looking beyond those sufferings to a time when the previously disobedient people would be transformed and live in harmony with God's law.

### LOOKING FOR JESUS, FINDING THE CROSS

In the Gospel reading, friends of Philip come to him and ask about meeting Jesus. When Philip and Andrew take the request to Jesus, he begins a cryptic discourse on discipleship, transformation, and divine judgment. We never hear whether Philip's friends got to personally meet Jesus. Perhaps they simply blended in with the crowd.

Jesus says, "[W]hen I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." The narrator says that Jesus' words indicate how he will die; the readers already know Jesus will be crucified. Jesus also speaks of divine judgment driving out the world's rulers and of the need to be transformed, like a seed growing into a productive plant. He warns about loving our life and losing it. Unlike Jeremiah's detailed vision, Jesus only hints at what kind of transformed life his death will bring.

What if we, like Philip's friends, want to get close to Jesus? Does that mean that the discourse on death and judgment is addressed to us? If Jesus will draw everyone to himself as he is "lifted up," does being closer to him mean joining him on his cross? (Do we want to be that close to Jesus?) Do we want to be transformed? If we say "yes," the liturgy these next two weeks can show us the only way the Church knows to get closer to Jesus: to be willing to be "lifted up" with him in his suffering—and in our own.

## TODAY'S READINGS

Jeremiah 31:31–34  
Psalm 51:3–4, 12–13, 14–15  
Hebrews 5:7–9  
John 12:20–33

FIFTH  
SUNDAY OF  
MARCH 21, 2021



## **Law Enforcement and Child Abuse Allegations**

By Robert Hugh Farley MS  
Farley International<sup>®</sup>  
Consultant to VIRTUS in Crimes against Children

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### **Introduction**

As we learn about continued protests in the United States to defund and abolish the police, one may wonder how this could affect the investigation of allegations of child abuse and the mission to protect children. Let us take this time to confirm what our appropriate actions should be in the event that any one of us suspects child abuse.

### **Background**

Across the United States, state laws address the reporting of child abuse to authorities when there is a suspicion that a child has been abused. One does not need to have proof that abuse actually occurred in order to make a report to authorities. Depending on the state, one can make a report to:

- A child abuse hotline staffed by Child Protective Services (CPS)
- A local law enforcement agency
- In some situations, reports are made to both CPS and law enforcement.

Responding to an allegation of suspected child abuse or neglect is a multidisciplinary issue. Because no one organization has all of the necessary resources, research has shown that child abuse investigations are best conducted in a coordinated manner by utilizing a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT), or trained child abuse professionals. This approach allows all of the team members to share information and eliminate any duplicative efforts to make the investigation as efficient and effective as possible. The core members of a traditional Multi-Disciplinary Team are:

- Law enforcement
- Child Protective Services (CPS), typically consisting of social workers
- The medical community, such as physicians and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE nurses)
- Prosecutors
- A child advocacy center (CAC)
- Mental health professionals

### **The Investigation**

The two disciplines of the MDT that are tasked with the initial investigation of allegations of child abuse are CPS and/or law enforcement.





A CPS investigation is usually limited to addressing allegations made against offenders who are parents, guardians or caretakers of the victim. The goal of the CPS investigation is to assess, in a timely fashion, whether the allegation is “unfounded” or “indicated.” When a report is “unfounded,” it means that the investigator did not find credible evidence that a child was abused or neglected. When a report is “indicated,” it means that the investigator found credible evidence that a child was abused or neglected. In “indicated” cases, the investigator will provide social worker services and take whatever action is needed, if any, to protect the child or children from further harm while ensuring their well-being. CPS investigators are not law enforcement officers and have no arrest powers.

In some situations, CPS and law enforcement will conduct joint child abuse investigations. Some studies have confirmed that law enforcement investigators and CPS investigators each possess unique skills that complement one another when the two disciplines coordinate their investigations. Unfortunately, joint investigations do not always occur.

Typically, law enforcement only becomes involved in the initial investigation of child abuse allegations when a crime has been committed. Not every allegation of child abuse warrants a criminal investigation, such as certain types of child neglect involving a lack of parenting skills. Criminal acts of child abuse include:

- [Serious physical](#) child abuse<sup>1, 2</sup>
- Child abuse homicide
- Child sexual abuse
- Child sexual exploitation
- Technology facilitated child sexual exploitation
- Child sex trafficking of minors

The role of law enforcement in child abuse cases begins with the initial call, continues through the investigation and culminates with the court proceedings. Law enforcement officers initially investigate and if/when it has been established that a crime has been committed, they will also:

- Protect the victim and facilitate a child-friendly [forensic interview](#)<sup>3</sup>
- Identify a crime scene
- Locate evidence
- Identify, arrest and interrogate the offender
- File the appropriate criminal charges
- Testify in court, or in some cases multiple courts

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/physical-abuse>

<sup>2</sup> <https://oijdp.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh176/files/pubs/243908.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nationalcac.org/forensic-interview-services/>



- Provide support and guidance to the child and family

## **Issues**

Law enforcement is essential for the protection of children and young people. One significant difference between CPS and law enforcement is that CPS typically has 24 hours to respond to an allegation of child abuse, while law enforcement will respond immediately to the allegation with a uniformed officer. Also, CPS has 30 days to complete an investigation, while law enforcement investigations are completed significantly faster. Oftentimes, a law enforcement officer's shift may not end until the investigation is completed. Additionally, in many states, a law enforcement officer can take "protective custody" of a child if abuse is suspected to protect a child from having to return home and be re-abused by the offender.

Some of the municipalities calling for the defunding of the police are discussing the concept of utilizing a social worker or safety officer to deal with crime. This is not a new idea. For years, many law enforcement agencies, across the United States, have actually hired and deployed social workers and/or mental health professionals. But, when social workers and/or mental health professionals are deployed, they are currently accompanied by a law enforcement officer. They cannot replace law enforcement, due to the potential volatile nature of many of the calls and the respective danger for everyone involved.

Reallocating or redirecting funding away from the police department to other government agencies that are funded by a local municipality would do a grave disservice to the welfare of children. With less funding, all of the specialized units within a police department, including child protection or special victim units (SVU), would cease to exist or be reduced dramatically, such as the Cook County Sheriff's Police, Child Exploitation Unit that I supervised for six years in Chicago.

As a law enforcement child abuse detective, budget cuts, fewer resources for the victims of child abuse and less ability to provide meaningful child abuse investigation training opportunities for officers due to the lack of accessible funds is horrifying. There would be dire consequences to the welfare of children without the 24/7 law enforcement capability to physically and quickly respond to child abuse allegations in an immediate fashion.

Recall that child abuse Multi-Disciplinary Teams are already in place in most jurisdictions. It is important to support and improve each discipline within the team, without removing a critical investigation team member. In fact, in my experience, more funding for the child abuse Multi-Disciplinary Teams are needed to better serve minors, not less funding. The defunding and reallocation of resources away from law enforcement will only further reduce the ability of law enforcement administrators to implement the positive changes that are desperately needed and are being addressed





now. Reforming law enforcement with accountability requirements would be a much better solution regarding the protection of children.

Law enforcement has always been involved in the historical struggle between upholding the law and breaking it. There are law enforcement officials who have not upheld their duty to protect and serve, and they must be held accountable. And, there are also law enforcement officials who have honored their commitment to serving the community and have helped the lives of countless children.

Even today, police officers still hold a special place of honor in young minds. Children enjoy pretending to be police officers and firefighters when they play. Other critical programs for children rely on funding, such as school resource officers, police athletic leagues or other community liaison programs that serve to introduce children to law enforcement and also serve to keep lines of communication open—so that children know they have a safe haven and can talk about what is happening when their homes or environments are anything but safe.

Having investigated crimes against children for twenty-eight years on the police department, I believe that a segment of society who will be overjoyed with abolishing the police are the child molesters, online predators and those who delight in seriously hurting or killing children or young people.

Let us take this time to reaffirm our commitment to doing the right thing for every child, regardless of any circumstance—we must keep them safe, and you are a critical part of that effort:

- To report suspected online sexual exploitation, contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) at 1-800-843-5678 or report online at [www.cybertipline.org](http://www.cybertipline.org).
- To report suspected child abuse or neglect, contact your local law enforcement or child protective services (CPS) in your state or county. You can find this number by performing a quick google search.
- When concerned about the immediate welfare of a child, or in cases of an emergency, call 911 right away.

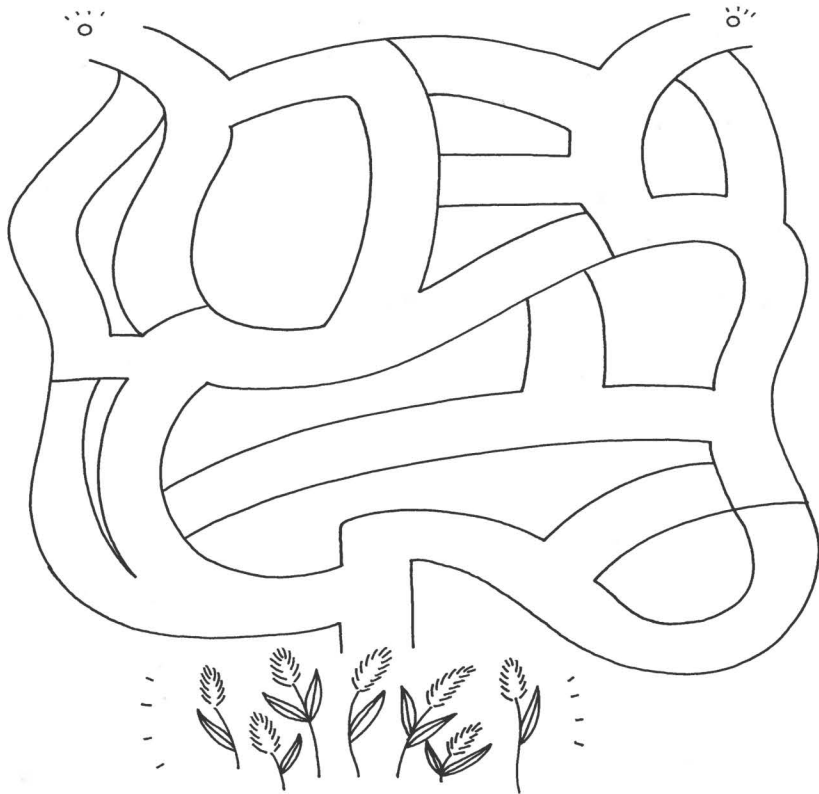
# God's Word for Children

Jesus said that when a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies,  
it produces fruit.

In the same way, we need to surrender our lives to Jesus.

Then he can help us do wonderful things for God.

Find out which seed will be planted in the soil  
and grow to become wheat.



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## Fifth Sunday of Lent

Let's find out what happens when we serve Jesus.

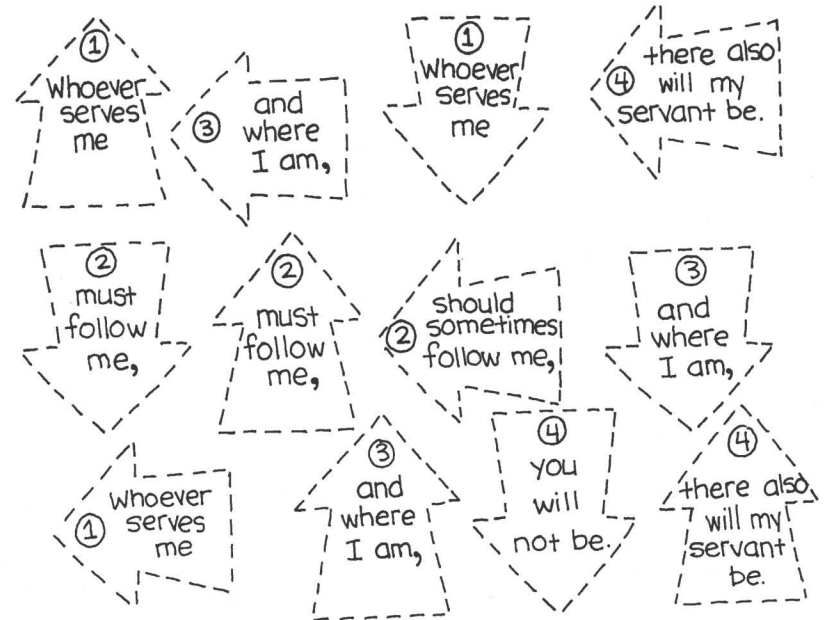
Use a different color to trace each of the three sets of arrows  
that point in the same direction.

Read each set in order.

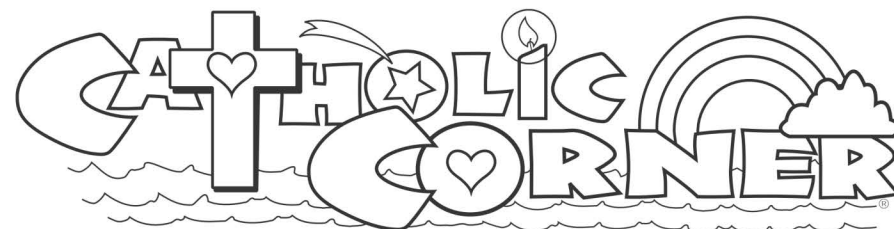
Which set tells us something Jesus said about serving him?

(You can read John 12:26 in your Bible for help.)

Put a star on each of these arrows.



**Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies,  
it remains just a grain of wheat.  
John 12 : 24**



## **A CLEAN HEART**

We are getting very close to the end of Lent. There are two choices for Gospels today. Whichever Gospel you hear—Jesus saying he would be lifted up on the cross (John 12:20–33) or the story of his friend Lazarus (John 11:1–45)—both psalms remind us that we need forgiveness and we can ask God’s help to change our hearts. Today’s two psalm responses psalms are:

*Create a clean heart in me, O God. (Psalm 51:12a)*

*With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption. (Psalm 130:7)*

If your parish has *catechumens*—people who will be baptized at Easter—part of their preparation is the celebration of *scrutiny rites* on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent. A scrutiny is an examination or careful study. The catechumens have the opportunity in these rites to examine their lives and ask the questions, “What am I doing that is good?” and “What things in my life do I need to change?” You might ask yourself the same questions. Use the letters of the word “forgiveness” to think of some actions or thoughts in your life that are good and others that need changing. Some examples are done for you. Mark good actions with a G and those you need to change with a C.

I am **F**riendly to others (G)

**O**

**R**

**G**

**I**

**V**

**E**

**N**

**E**

I will stop **S**aying mean things (C)

**S**

*If you sing the psalm at Mass today, listen carefully to the melody of the response.*

*Try to remember it and sing it during the week.*

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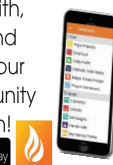
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