

Welcome to “Everyday Living With God.” I discovered this newsletter is somewhat based on the Jesuit spirituality, because they, too, seek to “find God in all things.” It is so true that God is with us at all times. Watch how He works in your life this week, this month, this year! If you think a nonparishioner may be interested in a copy of this newsletter, please notify Mary at Good Shepherd Parish by phoning the office (715-427-5259) or emailing the person’s name/address (or email address) to [goodshepherd@newnorth.net](mailto:goodshepherd@newnorth.net). Thank you.

## Seek Ye First

Times are a-changing! As we reach middle age and retirement age, we come to realize that if we do not keep up with modern technology, we will become lost in today’s society—or at least held back. My children sometimes laugh at me because I am overly cautious about online stuff. But when I hear about stolen identity and accounts being hacked, it is no laughing matter.

My kids also laugh at me because I balance my bank statement every month. They ask, “Why waste your time when all you have to do is check online banking and you can see what your balance is and that all the transactions are legit?”

Old habits are hard to break. My checkbook was off 2 cents when I went to balance my statement recently. After checking everything over four times, I still could not find the darn 2 cent error. “Just deduct the 2 cents and be done with it,” said my husband. But nope. I was determined to find it, if it took me all day.

As I looked for the 2 cent error, I recalled the story of the widow who had ten silver pieces and lost one. (Lk 15:8-10). Jesus told how the widow would sweep the house in a diligent search for that lost coin, which gave her great joy when she found it. The parable ends with Jesus saying, “I tell you, there will be the same kind of joy before the angels of God over one repentant sinner.”

This Scripture made me question, **“What should I be searching for? Is that 2 cents so valuable in my life today, that it has become my main focus?”**

With the time I spent looking for this 2 cent error, I could have called a friend I hadn’t spoken with for months. I could have baked a pie for a friend. I could have read Scripture. Oh my, I could have spoken with God about what He is asking of me!

Then the familiar words came to me, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God...and all these things shall be added unto you, Alleluia!” I realized the need for me to prioritize. It’s better to put God and his works at the top of my “to-do” list. Hopefully next time I am off 2 cents in my checkbook, I will put it out of my mind, and instead, seek the true joy that comes in serving the Lord first.

Baby birds learn to sing during spring. Although they are born with the ability to sing, they must learn the specific songs of their species. They often learn their songs within two months of being born. (Taken from the Logger’s Shopper). How do they learn these songs? By hearing them from their parents and fellow feathered friends. So it is with our children and grandchildren in regard to praying. Repeating the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Angel of God, and Prayer Before Meals while they are small, is a great way for them to learn the prayers. Are we praying with our youngsters? Are we showing them the importance of daily prayer?

## Angry Birds

Most of us love cardinals. The beautiful, red color of the male is stunning. Cardinals often remind us of loved ones who have died. I felt the same...until this year. We have a male cardinal who has annoyed us since early Spring. Daily (and many times a day) he flies into our windows. He starts before I am out of bed in the morning, going from one window to the next. He continues off and on throughout the day until dusk. This bird is not a happy camper. The beautiful crest of this cardinal is never up, but



rather laid back like a cat’s ears when they are ready to attack. He bangs at the windows with his feet, so it doesn’t harm him or his beak. He even perches on the window screens, glaring at me (or so it seems). Our 10-month old granddaughter finds him amusing.



We have come to view this bird as “Red,” one of the “angry birds” that Ben Kauer has enjoyed painting on wood. You can see them hanging in many trees and on posts in the community.

Perhaps we all have a bit of “angry bird” within us at times. Like this bird, we may reflect negative feelings if we continue to be filled with bitterness or anger, a need to control, or unhappiness. In order to remain who God created us to be, we need to free ourselves of negativity.

It is easy to have Red, the one crazy and obstinate cardinal, flaw my appreciation of these beautiful birds. I can see how this can happen with people too. Too many times we stereotype people by something they said or did. More often than not, it is a misunderstanding of words or events, and then we allow these things to escalate.

The book, “Life is Messy” that was covered during Lent, reminded us that we cannot always control the messy things in life—but we can control how we react to them.

Although Red irritates us with his daily banging, he is hurting himself more than us. And so it is with humans: Any negative attitude we have shows others what is in our hearts at the time. If it continues, it can destroy relationships. Until Red gives up making noise, perhaps I will turn my radio up in the house; otherwise get a set of ear plugs!

## Happy Mother's Day! Happy Father's Day!

Raising children is not always an easy task. We know there are many challenging moments, but every one of them is worth it. If you don't have biological children, you will find that in some way or another, we all have children: Perhaps we teach Religious Education; perhaps we have nieces and nephews or elderly parents to care for; perhaps we need to help and listen to a friend or co-worker in need. There are many ways we can parent.

Now that our children are grown, I hear a lot of stories as they grew up, stories that they think are hilarious, but at the time made me like that "angry bird on the previous page." For instance, I have heard the story of how I was lost when driving. It was pouring rain, and with the wipers on full blast, I still was unable to see which highway I was on, or even where any turn arounds may be. The kids thought it was hilarious watching me grow frantic.

Here's another story: The kids remember that every fall before school started I would bring down the dreaded, black garbage bags of clothes I had gathered from garage sales—to see what would fit them for the coming school year. They also recall the time I chewed them out for asking a lady why she had a mustache. They recall me standing in Ed's IGA and telling them, "If you don't behave, I am going to march you out to the car myself and make a big scene to embarrass the heck out of you."

With a husband driving truck, there were times the parenting fell upon my shoulders. One night after the kids were in bed, I got down on my knees by the couch and poured out my soul, saying, "God, I don't know if I can do this anymore." Almost instantly came back the words, "You are not alone. I am with you always."

I think most families are the same as ours. We have challenging times, but it is the cherished moments in life that matter most. Even today, my grown children and grandchildren know that when they leave after visiting us, I will be standing by the window or on the back deck, waving goodbye as they drive away. It is their assurance that my love goes with them.

I hope this Mother's Day and Father's Day you can share some of the funny stories, the struggles, and the loving memories. I think in doing so, you, too, can recognize the bond, the glue, that holds a family together. Turn to God for help. Forgive any misgivings, if any, and count the blessed times you had and still have in your life today.

## Who is Saint Fiacre?

We had better know this saint if we have a garden! Many don't know there is a patron saint of gardeners; or they assume it is St. Francis of Assisi, of whom statues, beckoning birds and animals, are often seen in gardens. But officially, the chief Roman Catholic saint of gardeners (and, folklore says, of cabdrivers and hemorrhoid sufferers) was a 7th Century Irishman whose horticultural and healing prowess at his adopted home in France earned him a feast day of Aug. 30. Churches in France and Ireland are named for him.

Information about St. Fiacre (fee-AH-cruh) is scant and, as with many early saints, the tales told of him vary. But he seems to have been born into a noble Irish family and, raised in a monastery, and became a monk. In about 628, as a young man seeking a place to retire in prayer and meditation, he traveled to France. St. Faro, the bishop of Meaux, granted him a plot where he lived in a small hermitage, planted a garden and founded a church in honor of the Virgin Mary. Over time, he acquired a reputation as a powerful healer, at a time when medical treatment involved mainly plants and prayer.

The legendary event that distinguishes him as the patron saint of gardeners occurred when Fiacre realized he needed more room to grow food and healing herbs for those who came to seek his help. St. Faro told him he could have as much land as he could dig in a day. Fiacre took his staff (or, in some versions, his spade or an ivory rod) and dragged it behind him.



Jacobus de Voragine, a 13th Century Archbishop of Genoa, wrote in *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints*, "Now may ye understand...much marvelous a great a miracle, for, by the will of our Lord, wheresoever the holy hermit Fiacre drew his staff, the trees fell down both on one side and on other, and round about where he drew his staff was a ditch suddenly made."

With the garden thus dug--don't we wish we had St. Fiacre and his staff, when it's time to dig the compost in?--his hermitage became a place of pilgrimage for people suffering from many ailments, long after the monk died Aug. 18, 670. A stone where legend says he once sat for relief from his hemorrhoids became a destination for other such sufferers.

In later years, his relics were much fought over and scattered throughout Europe. Eventually, his name became the French term for a taxicab, after carriages for hire lined up outside the Hotel de St. Fiacre in Paris.

The feast of St. Fiacre was once celebrated in some parts of France with processions through flower-strewn streets. But St. Fiacre is little known in the U.S. these days. Still, statues and other artwork can be found to decorate gardens. And some might find it a comfort, when stooping and weeding or stretching and lopping, to have St. Fiacre there.

*Taken from the Chicago Tribute website on St. Fiacre.*

We have waited patiently for Spring to come. How we longed for the fresh, Spring air; for opening our windows; for the warm sunshine, the new growth of flowers, grass, leaves, baby birds, for hanging clothes outside to dry (and smelling them when brought back into the house). We are anxious for Spring clean up of our homes, yards and gardens. This fresh, new life is gratifying. And so, we desire that same freshness within us. On your next walk, stop. Look up at the sky, and feel the Spirit of God filling you with each deep breath you take. It will put a fresh, clean attitude in our souls. Enjoy your Spring cleaning, and your walk with God!

