Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

30 January 2022

The Prophet Jeremiah

Michelangelo (1475-1564) Detail from the Sistine Chapel ceiling
CALL TO WORSHIP

* In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen.
* The Lord be with you.
All: And with your spirit.
Gloria | Mass of Renewal

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you,

thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the
COLLECT

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING | Jeremiah 1: 4-5, 17-19

RESPONSORIAL PSALM | Ps. 71: I Will Sing of Your Salvation

Refrain I

I will sing of your salvation. I will sing of your salvation.

Verses

1. In you, O LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your uprightness, rescue me, free me; incline your ear to me and save me.

2. Be my rock, my constant refuge, a mighty stronghold to save me, for you are my rock, my stronghold. My God, free me from the hand of the wicked.

3. It is you, O LORD, who are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth. On you I have leaned from my birth; from my mother’s womb, you have drawn me forth.

4. My mouth will tell of your justice, and all the day long of your salvation. O God, you have taught me from my youth, and I proclaim your wonders still.

SECOND READING | 1 Corinthians 12: 31 – 13: 13

HOMILY

NICENE CREED

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

UNIVERSAL PRAYER
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE PARISH!

We are grateful for your ongoing support of Saint Cecilia. The easiest way to make a financial contribution to our parish is to use the parish Flowcode below.

Using the Flowcode with the camera on your smartphone is as easy as Aim & Tap. Aim your camera at the Flowcode image and tap the notification banner when it appears on your phone’s screen. You may need to zoom in a bit to focus on the code.

If the Flowcode doesn’t work for you, please visit www.flowcode.com/page/stceciaboston.

You can also mail a check to:

Saint Cecilia Parish
18 Belvidere Street
Boston, MA 02115
**Liturgical Prayer**

- The Lord be with you.
  
  All: And with your spirit.

- Lift up your hearts.
  
  All: We lift them up to the Lord.

- Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
  
  All: It is right and just.
HOLY, HOLY | Mass of the Angels and Saints

Steven Janco

HOLY, HOLY | Mass of the Angels and Saints

HOLY, HOLY LORD, GOD OF POWER AND

MIGHT, HEAV’N AND EARTH ARE FULL OF YOUR GLORY.

HOSANNA, HOSANNA, HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST.

HOSANNA, HOSANNA, HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST.

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

HOSANNA, HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST.

HOSANNA, HOSANNA, HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST.

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION | Mass of the Angels and Saints

Steven Janco

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION | Mass of the Angels and Saints

WE PROCLAIM YOUR DEATH, O LORD, AND PROFESS YOUR RESURRECTION UNTIL YOU COME AGAIN.
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses 
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.  
Amen.
Communion Meditation | Ubi Caritas

Maurice Duruflé
(1756-1791)

Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est.
Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor.
Exultemus, et in ipso lucemur.
Timeamus, et amemus Deum vivum.
Et ex corde diligamus nos sincero.

Where charity and love are, God is there.
Christ’s love has gathered us into one.
Let us rejoice and be pleased in Him.
Let us fear, and let us love the living God.
And may we love each other with a sincere heart.
CONCLUDING RITES

* The Lord be with you.
All: And with your spirit.

* May almighty God bless you, the Father, (✱) and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
All: Amen.

* Go forth, the Mass is ended.

* All: Thanks be to God.
THANKS FROM OUR ADVENT GIVING TREE RECIPIENTS

Thanks to you, our students celebrated their holiday with many gifts. Your generous gifts of toys and books were given to our 60+ children.
- Kathleen Nichols, Director of Children Services at Catholic Charities Yawkey Center

We called and St. Cecilia's answered by bringing holiday cheer to the many children of Project Hope Boston.
Our sincere thanks and best wishes! - Njibo Mbuyi, Development Associate at Project Hope

The St. Cecilia's Giving Tree is something we look forward to each year. During the pandemic more than ever, sharing warm coats and other winter essentials with our guests is so vital, so having an abundance of these items makes a huge difference.
- Grace McEnery, Outreach & Development Manager at Haley House

Please extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to bolstering the faith of every man, woman and child who calls the YMCA of Greater Boston home.
- The Community at Families in Transition at the YMCA

Thank you for the coats, boots, warm weather gear, and care kits! Please know how much of a difference your community makes in our patients' lives.
- Alyssa Brassil, Director of the Annual Fund at Boston Health Care for the Homeless

We are so grateful to the generous and compassionate members of St Cecilia’s Parish. Your gifts provided warmth, delight, and dignity.
- Nancy Armstrong, Director of Operations at Women’s Lunch Place
January 18, 2022

Parishioners at St. Cecilia Parish
18 Belvidere Street
Boston, MA 02115

Dear friends at St. Cecilia:

On behalf of everyone here at Boston Medical Center’s Elders Living at Home Program (ELAHP), I offer our deepest thanks for your incredibly generous response to our elderly clients through your Christmas giving program.

We received over 75 gift cards from a variety of grocery stores, pharmacies and cafes that we will be able to offer to our clients throughout the year to help them make ends meet or when special circumstances occur. The elders we serve have an average fixed income of about $800 per month to pay for shelter, food and other necessities. They are all individuals who are currently experiencing or have experienced homelessness. Most of them have very limited support from family or friends.

The gift cards you so generously provided will be used throughout the year to give to clients for special occasions, when emergencies occur, or when things get tighter than usual. Having the gift cards available will make a tremendous difference to these folks not only in meeting basic needs but also to sometimes have a few extras. And many of you included with your gifts notes of encouragement to our clients, and also to our staff. Those notes are so very welcome, and deeply appreciated.

As it has been for all of us, COVID-19 has been a tremendous challenge to these individuals. Given their age, housing instability and presence of chronic health conditions, they are in one of the very highest risk categories due to the pandemic. Many of them have experienced additional hardships, including financial challenges due to rising prices, increased isolation and family stresses. To be able to have a little something to fall back on, or to have a little extra for a birthday or other special day, is truly priceless gift.

Our sincere and deep thanks to all of you, and may 2022 bring you all many blessings.

Sincerely,

Eileen O’Brien
Director
Elders Living at Home Program
OUR COMMUNITY NEWS

MINISTERS OF THE LITURGY

Saturday, January 29 | 5:00 p.m.
Rev. Peter Grover, OMV, celebrant
Mary Kane, lector

Sunday, January 30 | 8:00 a.m.
Rev. Jim Shaughnessey, SJ, celebrant
Jim Dougherty, lector

Sunday, January 30 | 9:30 a.m.
Rev. Peter Gyves, SJ, celebrant
Charlie Prucher, Karen McMenamy, and Michael Lake, lectors

Sunday, January 30 | 11:30 a.m.
Rev. Peter Gyves, SJ, celebrant
Mark Richburg and Christie Hedges, lectors

Sunday, January 30 | 6:00 p.m.
Rev. Bojan Bijelic, SJ, celebrant
Rev. Mr. David Kiblinger, SJ, homilist
Kathleen Egan and Karen Vachon, lectors

SPECIAL INTENTIONS

Sunday, January 30 | 8:00 a.m.
Julia Powell, Memorial
Sr. Jeannette Normandin, SSA, Memorial

Sunday, January 30 | 9:30 a.m.
George Zammit, Memorial
Theresa Zammit, Special Intention
Fr. Vin Maffeii, Memorial
Catherine and Bob Carroll, Memorial
Catherine Aloisi, 50th Anniversary

Sunday, January 30 | 11:30 a.m.
Patricia Geralyn Perry, Memorial

Wednesday, February 2 | 8:00 a.m.
Lucy Chagnon, Memorial

THIS SUNDAY’S READINGS
Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19
1 Corinthians 12:31—13:13

NEXT SUNDAY’S READINGS
Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8
1 Corinthians 15:1-11

LITURGY OF THE HOURS
Please join us for Evening Prayer & Morning Prayer
Friday, January 21 at 6:30 p.m.
Memorial of Saint Agnes
Tuesday, January 25 at 6:30 p.m.
Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul
Tuesday, February 1 at 6:30 p.m.
Vigil of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord
Saturday, February 5 at 9:00 a.m.
Memorial of Saint Agatha
Friday, February 11 at 6:30 p.m.
Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes
Tuesday, February 22 at 6:30 p.m.
Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter

TAIZÉ PRAYER
Please join us as we mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
Saturday, January 22 at 6:30 p.m.
A meditative hour of song, scripture, and silence.
SAINT CECILIA PARISH

PRAYERS & OCCASIONS

Our Sick
Please pray for all our sick and for those who are in need of our prayer, especially Delia Alvarez, Charlie Naughton, Peter Tracy, Mary Ann Weber, Bob Haas, Bob Roppolo, Christopher Gobron, Joy Gilbert, Mary Walters, John Powers, Marc Pelletier, Larry Murphy, Josephine Mason, Marian Licameli, Ray Cronin, Rosalind Sica, Nicholas Collins, Liam Nedell, and Nancy Jordan.

Welcome to Saint Cecilia Parish
We are pleased to welcome the following new members of our parish who have recently registered: Catherine Brennan of Boston, Mira Kelly-Fair of Somerville, Marguerite and John Gallagher of Roslindale, Kimberly Berberich and Gregory Ouellette of Roslindale, Sara and Paul Travis of Boston, Sara Mahoney of West Roxbury, and Mary Clark of Cambridge. If you have not previously registered you can do so online at www.stceciliaboston.org.

Thank You
Last week’s second collection was designated to support the Catholic Church in Latin America. Due to your generosity we collected $1,505 to help with various pastoral projects throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Thank you very much!

Memorial of St. Blaise—The Blessing of Throats
This Thursday, the Church remembers Saint Blaise, bishop and martyr. Saint Blaise lived in Turkey and Armenia during the fourth century and once saved a boy who was choking on a fish bone. From the eighth century onwards, Saint Blaise has been invoked on behalf of the sick and it has been said that those who light a candle in his memory will be preserved from illnesses of the throat. The customary Blessing of Throats will be given at the 8:00 liturgy on Thursday morning.

LOW-GLUTEN ALTAR BREAD AVAILABLE
If you have celiac disease, please let us know. We have a supply of low-gluten altar bread available for those who cannot tolerate gluten. These hosts are prepared by the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Clyde, Missouri.

WELCOME, CHRISTINE!
Christine is the newest member of the Saint Cecilia communications team! As our Digital Media Coordinator, she’ll be responsible for keeping you all up-to-date on the parish's Facebook, Instagram, and other social media channels. As parish life returns to in-person gatherings in the next month or two, you’ll see her taking photos and getting the scoops from ministries and parish leaders. Christine most recently worked in communications at her hometown art museum, the Provincetown Art Association and Museum (PAAM). Christine received an undergraduate degree in art history and Spanish from Wellesley College. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, crafting, and eating sweets.

OFFERINGS FROM PASTORAL CARE
Pastoral care is offering three different support groups in February: grief support, caregiver support, and chronic illness support. Groups will be limited to 6-8 participants, meeting on Zoom, with an initial commitment of 8 weeks. For more information please contact Giovanna at gfranchi@stceciliaboston.org or (857) 317-3823.

ONLINE COFFEE HOUR
Sunday, February 6 | 4:00 p.m. EST | Zoom

The next Online Coffee Hour for our remote fellowship community is Sunday, February 6, at 4:00 p.m. EST. This month our topic is “Music at Saint Cecilia: Its History, Instruments, and Ensembles” with Robert Duff. Robert is the Director of Music at Saint Cecilia where he plans all liturgical music, conducts two choirs, and oversees seven people in the music and livestream programs. If you’ve ever wondered how the music is chosen or where the singers in the choir hail from, or just wish you could meet our fabulous music director, you won’t want to miss this coffee hour! After Robert’s talk, we’ll have time to break into smaller groups for discussion. To receive the Zoom link for this meeting please email Mary Ann at gallaghercomms@gmail.com.
The Wisdom and Mature Spirituality group is now reading *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the Twelve Steps* by Fr. Richard Rohr. In this inspiring and deep book, Fr. Rohr ties gospel principles to the Twelve Steps to help free all—addicted or not—of any spiritual obstacles to a deeper relationship with God and more active living out of the gospel. The Wisdom group is always happy to welcome new members in the second half of life. If you'd like to join us for fellowship and conversation on Sunday mornings from 8:30 to 9:30 via Zoom, please email Deb Garcia at sc.wisdomandmaturespirituality@gmail.com.

**SAINT CECILIA MARRIAGE MINISTRY**

Our parish marriage ministry is creating a mentoring program for married couples. If you are part of a couple and would like more information about being on this team, please let us know. Marriage ministry is also looking for individuals or couples who might be willing to give a witness talk during one of our marriage prep classes. Lastly, we are looking for resources that can be used as part of counseling and/or spiritual direction for married couples. If one or more of these opportunities is appealing, please reach out to us at stc.marriage@gmail.com.

**WINTER WALK BOSTON**

Ending homelessness is within our reach! For the sixth year, a consortium of agencies focused on homelessness, including Pine Street Inn, Boston Health Care for the Homeless, Y2Y Harvard Square, and common cathedral are sponsoring a 2-mile fundraising walk through the streets of Boston. The event takes place on Sunday, February 13 at 8:30 a.m. and begins at Copley Square Plaza, Back Bay. It is hoped that each adult walker will raise $100—either by paying it as a registration fee or raising it from friends and family. There is a Saint Cecilia team again this year—we’ve participated each year since the event began—and if you would like to join us, please go to:

https://secure.qgiv.com/event/winterwalk22/register/

---

Are you an adult Catholic who has been baptized and received first communion, but was never confirmed? If so, perhaps this is the right time. This year’s Central Region adult confirmation will take place on Monday, March 21 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Catherine of Genoa Church (Sts. Louis & Zelie Martin Parish) in Somerville.

We will be offering a five-session virtual class at Saint Cecilia for adults who wish to prepare for the sacrament of confirmation. These classes will take place on Zoom from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. on the following Thursdays:

- February 17
- February 24
- March 3
- March 10
- March 17 *this date is likely to change to accommodate those celebrating with corned beef & cabbage!

If you would like more information or would like to register for this class, please contact Scott MacDonald at smacdonald@stceciliaboston.org.

**DONATE GIFT CARDS TO SUPPORT AFGHAN REFUGEES**

For the past five years, our parish has provided ongoing support to Catholic Charities’ Refugee and Immigration Services. We have offered to provide refugee families with supermarket gift cards so that they will have food while their applications for political asylum are processed. For the months of January and February, all the gift cards we collect will be given to the two Afghan families that our parish is helping resettle in Quincy and Dorchester. If you would like to contribute, please purchase $25 gift cards to Market Basket, Stop & Shop, or Shaw’s/Star Markets. We are also looking for donations of gift cards to enable the families to purchase new winter clothing. This process is particularly important because it helps the families acclimate to American shopping and currency. We would appreciate donations of gift cards up to $50 for Old Navy, Target, and TJ Maxx. Please feel free to drop gift cards in the offertory basket at Mass or mail them to: Mark Lippolt, Saint Cecilia Parish, 18 Belvidere Street, Boston, MA 02115. For other ways to help, go to bit.ly/PC-SC-help.
MEMORIAL OF SAINT BRIGID, PATRONESS OF IRELAND, 1 FEBRUARY

Given the history of our parish and its founding by immigrant Bostonians—many of them Irish household servants—it is not surprising that our stained glass windows memorialize two of Ireland’s patron saints: Patrick and Brigid. Brigid, with an initial group of seven companions, is credited with organizing communal consecrated religious life for women in Ireland and she founded two monastic institutions, one for men and one for women, including one in Kildare. The daughter of a nobleman and a slave mother who was converted and baptized by Saint Patrick, Brigid spent her childhood as a servant in her father’s house and was well-known for her generosity to the poor. Legend says that she prayed that her beauty be taken from her so no one would seek her hand in marriage; her prayer was granted, and she regained her beauty only after making her vows. Known for her goodness, piety, and ability to accomplish many things, Brigid had many miracles attributed to her during her lifetime. Several of these miracles involve healing leprosy, blindness, and muteness. Brigid lived from 453 to 524. In addition to being a patron saint of Ireland, she is the patron saint of nuns, babies, travelers, dairy works, and children whose parents are not married.

CATIE’S CLOSET

We are excited to again invite you to support Catie’s Closet! Catie’s Closet assists children and teens aged 4-18 who are experiencing poverty by giving them clothing in a discreet and respectful way through their schools. Their goal is to improve school attendance and graduation rates. They have targeted 100 schools locally and serve, on average, 70,000 students daily.

This February, in honor of Saint Valentine’s Day, we are holding a virtual clothing drive for Catie’s Closet. You can get detailed information about donation criteria, their Amazon Wish List, or delivering your donation directly to their location at https://www.catiescloset.org/get-involved/#donate or check their website for opportunities to get involved - www.catiescloset.org. We are unable to accept donated items at Saint Cecilia at this time.
When we think about prayer, we usually regard it as one of the many things we do to live a full and mature Christian life. We say to ourselves or to each other: “We should not forget to pray because prayer is important; without it, our life becomes shallow. We need to give our time not only to people, but to God as well.” If we are fervent in our conviction that prayer is important, we might even be willing to give a whole hour to prayer each day, or a whole day every month, or a whole week every year. Thus, prayer becomes a part, indeed a very important part, of our life.

But when the apostle Paul speaks about prayer, he uses a very different language. He does not speak about prayer as a part of life, but says it is all of life. He does not mention prayer as something we should not forget, but claims it is our ongoing concern. He does not exhort his readers to pray once in a while, regularly or often, but without hesitation admonishes them to pray constantly, unceasingly, without interruption. Paul does not ask us to spend some of every day in prayer. No, Paul is much more radical. He asks us to pray day and night, in joy and in sorrow, at work and at play, without intermission or breaks. For Paul, praying is like breathing. It cannot be interrupted without mortal danger.

To the Christians in Thessalonica, Paul writes: “Pray constantly, and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5:17-18). Paul not only demands unceasing prayer, but also practices it. “We constantly thank God for you” (1 Thess. 2:13), he says to his community in Greece. “We feel we must be continually thanking God for you” (2 Thess. 1:3). “We pray continually that our God will make you worthy of His call” (2 Thess. 1:11). To the Romans, he writes: “I never fail to mention you in my prayers” (Rom. 1:9), and he comforts his friend Timothy with the words: “Always I remember you in my prayers” (2 Tim. 1:3).

The two Greek terms that appear repeatedly in Paul’s letters are pantote and adialeiptos, which mean “always” and “without interruption.” These words make it clear that for Paul, prayer is not a part of living, but all of living, not a part of his thought, but all of his thought, not a part of his emotions and feelings, but all of them. Paul’s fervor allows no place for partial commitments, piecemeal giving or hesitant generosity. He gives all and asks all.

This radicalism obviously raises some difficult questions. What does it mean to pray without ceasing? How can we live our life, with its many demands and obligations, as an uninterupted prayer? What about the endless row of distractions that intrude on us day after day? Moreover, how can our sleep, our needed moments of diversion and the few hours in which we try to escape from the tensions and conflicts of life be lifted up into unceasing prayer? These questions are real, and have puzzled many Christians who wanted to take seriously Paul’s exhortation to pray without ceasing.

One of the best-known examples of this search is the 19th-century Russian peasant who desired so much to be obedient to Paul’s call for uninterrupted prayer that he went from staretz to staretz looking for an answer, until he finally found a holy man who taught him the Jesus Prayer. He told the peasant to say thousands of times each day: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.” In this way, the Jesus Prayer slowly became united with his breathing and heartbeat so that he could travel through Russia carrying in his knapsack the Bible, the Philokalia, some bread and salt, and living a life of unceasing prayer (The Way of a Pilgrim, trans. R. M. French. Seabury Press, 1965). Although we are not 19th-century Russian peasants with a similar “wanderlust,” we still share the question of this simple peasant: How do we pray without ceasing?

I would like to respond to this question not in the context of the wide, silent Russian prairies of the 19th century, but in the context of the restlessness of our contemporary Western society. I propose to look at unceasing prayer as the conversion of our unceasing thought processes. My central question, therefore, is: “How can we turn our perpetual mental activities into perpetual prayer?” Or, to put it more simply: “How can thinking become praying?”

First, I want to discuss how our unceasing thinking is the source of our joy as well as our pain. Then I want to show how this unceasing thinking can be turned into an uninterrupted conversation with God. Finally, I would like to explore how we can develop a discipline that will promote this ongoing conversion from thought to prayer. In this way, I hope that unceasing prayer can be removed from the sphere of romantic sentimentalism and become a realistic possibility for our demanding lives in the 20th century.
Unceasing Thoughts

Lately I have been wondering if we ever do not think. It seems to me that we are always involved in some kind of thought process and that being without thoughts is not a real human option. When Blaise Pascal calls a human being a “roseau pensant,” a thinking reed, he indicates that our ability to think constitutes our humanity and that it is our thinking that sets us apart from all other created beings. All our emotions, passions and feelings are intimately connected with our thoughts. We could even say that our thoughts form the cradle in which our joys as well as our sorrows are born. The words “thoughts” and “thinking” are obviously used here in a very broad sense and include different mental processes. When we look at these different mental processes, it would appear that whether we like it or not, we are involved in, or subjected to, unceasing thoughts.

One of the forms of thinking with which we are most familiar, but which represents only a small part of our mental processes, is reflective thinking. Reflection is a consciously bending back over events or the ideas, images or emotions connected with these events. It requires the application of our willpower in a concentrated effort; it calls for discipline, endurance, patience and much mental energy. Those who study a great deal know how hard systematic reflection is and how it can tire us and even exhaust us. Reflection is real work and does not come easily.

But not reflecting does not mean not thinking. In fact, we often find ourselves thinking without even realizing it. Suddenly we become aware of the fact that our minds have drifted off into thoughts about family, friends, future ambitions or past failures. We neither desired nor planned to think about these things, but simply discover ourselves being led into a complex network of ideas, images and feelings.

This passive, nonreflective thinking is often disturbing and can make us anxious or even apprehensive. We realize that our mind thinks things that we cannot control, that sneak up on us and interfere with our best intentions. During the most solemn moments, we may find ourselves thinking the most banal thoughts. While listening to a sermon about God’s love, we find ourselves wondering about the haircut of the preacher. While reading a spiritual book, we suddenly realize that our mind is busy with the question of how much peanut butter and how much jam to put on our next sandwich. While watching a beautiful ceremony at St. Peter’s, we notice ourselves trying to figure out where in the Vatican the laundromat is located, in which those thousands of surplices will be cleaned after the service. Indeed, not infrequently we catch ourselves thinking very low things during very high moments. The problem, however, is that we cannot think about nothing. We have to think and we often feel betrayed by our own uncontrolled or uncontrollable thoughts.

Our thought processes reach even deeper than our reflective moments and our uncontrolled mental wanderings. They also reach into our sleeping hours. We might wake up in the middle of the night and find ourselves part of a frightening car race, a delicious banquet or a heavenly choir. Sometimes we are able to give a detailed account of all the things that happened to us in our dreams. Sometimes we remember only the final moment of our dream and sometimes we are left with only a vague fear or an undefined joy. We know that much is going on during our sleep and that occasionally we catch only bits and pieces of it. Careful encephalographic studies have shown that our mind is always active during sleep; we are always dreaming even when we have no recollection of its occurrence or its content. And although we might tend to discard our thought processes during our night’s sleep as insignificant in comparison with our reflections or our undirected mental wanderings, we should not forget that for many people, dreams proved to be the main source of knowing. The patriarch Jacob heard God’s call when he saw angels going up and down a ladder. The first Joseph was deported to Egypt because he irritated his brothers with his visions of sheaves, sun, moon and stars bowing to him, and the second Joseph fled to Egypt after he had seen an angel warning him of Herod. And in our century, apparently so far from biblical times, we find Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung informing us that our dreams will tell us the truth.

Thus, we are indeed involved in unceasing thought day and night, willingly or unwillingly, during our most alert moments and during our deepest sleep, while working and while resting. This is our human predicament, a predicament that causes us great joy as well as immense pain. Our ceaseless thought is our burden as well as our gift. We wish that we could stop this thinking for a while. Perhaps then we would not be haunted by the memories of lost friends, by the awareness of past sins, by the knowledge of hunger and oppression in our world.

These thoughts can impose themselves on us at the most unwelcome hours or keep us awake when we are most in need of sleep. So we wish that we could just be without thoughts, that we could simply erase this disturbing graffiti of the mind. But then, without thought there can be no smile, no laughter, no quiet joy. How can we be glad to see friends again when we are unable to think of them? How can we celebrate a birthday, a national holiday or a great religious feast if our mind is not aware of the meaning of the event? How can we be grateful if we cannot remember the gifts we have received? How can we lift up our heart and sing and dance without the thousands of thoughts that nurture our mind constantly?

Our thoughts are indeed the cradle where sorrow and joy are born. With an empty mind our heart cannot mourn or feast, our eyes cannot cry or laugh, our hands cannot wring or clap,
our tongue cannot curse or praise. Thus, as “thinking reeds,” we are able to feel deeply and experience life to the full with all its sorrows and joys. This unceasing thinking, which lies at the core of our humanity, needs to be converted slowly but persistently into unceasing prayer.

Unceasing Prayer
To pray unceasingly, as Paul asks us to do, would be completely impossible if it would mean to think constantly about God. Not only for people who have many different concerns to occupy their minds, but also for monks who spend many hours a day in prayer, thinking about God all the time is an unrealistic goal, which, if sought too vigorously, could lead to a mental breakdown.

To pray, I think, does not primarily mean to think about God in contrast to thinking about other things, or to spend time with God instead of spending time with other people. Rather, it means to think and live in the presence of God. As soon as we begin to divide our thoughts into thoughts about God and thoughts about people and events, we remove God from our daily life and put Him in a pious little niche where we can think pious thoughts and experience pious feelings. Although it is important and even indispensable for the spiritual life to set apart time for God and God alone, prayer can eventually become unceasing prayer when all our thoughts beautiful and ugly, high and low, prideful and shameful, sorrowful and joyful can be thought in the presence of God. What I mean is that we convert our unceasing thinking into unceasing prayer when we move from a self-centered monologue to a God-centered dialogue. This requires that we turn all our thoughts into conversation. The main question, therefore, is not so much what we think, but to whom we present our thoughts.

It is not hard to see how a real change takes place in our daily life when we find the courage to keep our thoughts to ourselves no longer, to speak out, confess them, share them, bring them into conversation. As soon as an embarrassing or exhilarating no longer, to speak out, confess them, share them, bring them into conversation. As soon as an embarrassing or exhilarating thought processes because in prayer we move away from ourselves—our great concern with ourselves and our undue sensitivity to how we feel or think. It makes us experience life as a constant fluctuation between “feeling high” and “feeling low,” between “bad days” and “good days,” and thus becomes a form of narcissism.

Prayer is not introspection. It does not look inward but outward. It is not a scrupulous analysis of our own thoughts and feelings, but a careful attentiveness to Him who invites us to an unceasing conversation. Prayer is the presentation of all thoughts—our intentional thoughts as well as our day and night dreams—to our loving Father so that He can see them and respond to them with His divine compassion. Prayer is the joyful affirmation of Psalm 139 that God knows our mind and heart and that nothing is hidden from Him:

>You know me through and through from having watched my bones take shape
>when I was being formed in secret
>knitted together in the limbo of the womb (14-15).

>God, examine me and know my heart, probe me and know my thoughts, make sure I do not follow pernicious ways
>and guide me in the way that is everlasting (23-24).

Prayer indeed is a radical conversion of all our mental processes because in prayer we move away from ourselves—our worries, preoccupations and self-gratifications—by directing all that we recognize as ours to God in the simple trust that through His love all will be made new.

But this conversion from unceasing thought to unceasing prayer is far from easy. There is a deep resistance to making ourselves so vulnerable, so naked, so totally unprotected. Naturally, we want to love God and worship Him, but we also want to keep a little corner of our inner life for ourselves, where we can hide and think our own secret thoughts, dream our own dreams and play with our own mental fabrications. We are always tempted to select carefully the thoughts that we
bring into our conversation with God.

What makes us so stingy? Maybe we wonder if God can take all that goes on in our mind and heart. Can He accept our hateful thoughts, our cruel fantasies and our bizarre dreams? Can He handle our primitive urges, our inflated illusions and our exotic mental castles? Or maybe we simply want to hold on to our own pleasurable imaginings and stimulating reveries, afraid that in showing them to our Lord, we may have to give them up. Thus, we are constantly tempted to fall back into introspection out of fear or out of greed, and to keep from our God what often is most in need of His healing touch.

This witholding from God of a large number of our thoughts leads us onto a road that we probably would never consciously want to take. It is the road of idolatry. Idolatry means to worship false images, and that is precisely what happens when we keep our fantasies, worries and joys to ourselves and do not present them to Him who is our Lord. By refusing to share these thoughts, we limit His lordship and erect little altars to the mental images that we do not want to submit to a divine conversation.

I remember how I once visited a psychiatrist complaining of my difficulty in controlling my fantasy life. I told him that disturbing images kept coming up and that I found it hard to detach myself from them. When he had listened to my story, he smiled and said: “Well, Father, as a priest you should know that this is idolatry, because your God is saying that you should not worship false images.” Only then did I realize fully what it means to confess having sinned not only in word and action, but also in thought. It is to confess idolatry, one of the oldest and most pervasive temptations.

Unceasing prayer is extremely difficult, then, precisely because we like to keep parts of ourselves to ourselves and experience real resistance to subjecting all that we are to God’s lordship. Unceasing prayer is indeed an ongoing struggle against idolatry. When all our thoughts, those of our days as well as those of our nights, have been brought into a loving conversation with God, then we can speak about obedience in the full sense. Since this is obviously never a task that is completed, we need to raise the question of discipline. What disciplines are there to help us in becoming disciples of Christ and living in obedience to our heavenly Father?

Disciplines

Since there are so many resistances to the conversion of our unceasing thinking into unceasing prayer, we need discipline. Without discipline, unceasing prayer remains a vague ideal, something that has a certain romantic appeal but which is not very realistic in our contemporary world. Discipline means that something specific and concrete needs to be done to create the context in which a life of uninterrupted prayer can develop. Unceasing prayer requires the discipline of prayer exercises. Those who do not set aside a certain place and time each day to do nothing else but pray can never expect their unceasing thought to become unceasing prayer. Why is this planned prayer practice so important? It is important because through this practice God can become fully present to us as a real partner in our conversation.

This discipline of prayer embraces many forms of prayer—communal as well as individual prayer, oral as well as mental prayer. It is of first importance that we strive for prayer with the understanding that it is an explicit way of being with God. We often say: “All of life should be lived in gratitude,” but this is only possible if at certain times we give thanks in a very concrete and visible way. We often say: “All our days should be lived for the glory of God,” but this is only possible if a day is regularly set apart to give glory to God. We often say: “We should love one another always,” but this is only a possibility when we regularly perform concrete and unambiguous acts of love. It is likewise true that we can only say: “All our thoughts should be prayer,” if there are times in which we make God our only thought.

Common to all disciplined prayer, whether it be liturgical, devotional or contemplative, is that in it we try to direct all our attention to God and God alone. With this in mind, I would like to discuss in some detail the importance of the discipline of contemplation as one of the roads to unceasing prayer. Although many good things have been written about contemplation and contemplative prayer, many people still have the impression that contemplative prayer is something very special, very “high” or very difficult, and really not for ordinary people with ordinary jobs and ordinary problems. This is unfortunate, because the discipline of contemplative prayer is particularly valuable for those who have so much on their minds that they suffer from fragmentation. If it is true that all Christians are called to bring all their thoughts into an ongoing conversation with their Lord, then contemplative prayer can be a discipline that is especially important for those who are deeply involved in the many affairs of this world.

Contemplative prayer is prayer in which we attentively look at God. How is this possible, since nobody can see God and live? The mystery of the Incarnation is that it has become possible to see God in and through Jesus Christ. Christ is the image of God. In and through Christ, we know that God is a loving Father whom we can see by looking at His Son. When Jesus spoke to His disciples about His Father, Philip said impatiently: “Lord, let us see the Father, and then we shall be satisfied.” Then Jesus answered: “To have seen me is to have seen the Father, so how can you say, ‘Let us see the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?” (Jn. 14:8-10). Contemplative prayer, therefore, means to see Christ as the image of God the Father. All the images consciously
or unconsciously created by our mind should be made subject to Him who is the only image of God. Contemplative prayer can be described as an act of seeing Christ in the imagination, of letting Him enter fully into our consciousness so that He becomes the icon always present in our inner room. By looking at Christ with loving attention, we learn with our mind and heart what it means to say that lie is the way to the Father. Jesus is the only one who has seen the Father. He says: “Not that anybody has seen the Father, except the one who comes from God” (Jn. 6:46). Jesus’ entire being is a perpetual seeing of the Father. His life and works are an uninterrupted contemplation of His Father. For us, therefore, contemplation means an always increasing imaginative vision of Jesus, so that in, through and with Him, we can see the Father and live in His presence.

How, then, do we imagine Christ so that we can indeed enter into dialogue with Him and allow our unceasing thought to be transformed into unceasing prayer? There is no single answer to this question, because every Christian must develop a personal discipline according to his or her task in life, work schedule, cultural heritage and personality. It belongs to the nature of a discipline that it conforms to the needs of the individual man or woman who wants to have a life with Christ. Therefore, rather than present a general account of contemplative prayer, I will describe one example of a contemplative discipline in the hope that it might suggest different ways of prayer to different people.

This very simple discipline for contemplative prayer is to read, every evening before going to sleep, the readings of the next day’s Eucharist with special attention to the Gospel. It is often helpful to take one sentence or word that offers special comfort and repeat it a few times so that with that sentence or word, the whole content can be brought to mind and allowed slowly to descend from the mind into the heart.

I have found this practice to be a powerful support in times of crisis. It is especially helpful during the night, when worries or anxieties may keep me awake and seduce me into idolatry. By remembering the Gospel story or any of the sayings of the Old or New Testament authors, I can create a safe mental home into which I can lead all my preoccupations and let them be transformed into quiet prayer.

During the following day, a certain time must be set apart for explicit contemplation. This is a time in which to look at Christ as He appears in the reading. Obviously, the best way to do this is to reread the Gospel of the day and to imagine the Lord as He speaks or acts with His people. In this hour, we can see Him, hear Him, touch Him and make Him present to our whole being. We can see Christ as our healer, our teacher and our guide. We can see Him in His indignation, His compassion, His suffering and His glory. We can look at Him, listen to Him and enter into conversation with Him. Often, the other readings from the Old and New Testaments help to intensify our image of Christ, because, as Vincent van Gogh once said, the Gospels are the top of the mountain of which the other biblical writings form the slopes.

For me, this discipline of having an “empty time” to be with Christ as He speaks to me in the readings of the day has proved very powerful. I found that wherever I was or whatever I did during the rest of the day, the image of Christ that I had contemplated during that “empty time” stayed with me as a beautiful icon. Sometimes it was the conscious center of all my thoughts, but more often it was a quiet presence of which I was only indirectly aware. In the beginning, I hardly noticed the difference. Slowly, however, I realized that I could indeed carry Christ, the image of God, with me and let Him affect not only my reflective thoughts but my daydreams as well. I am convinced that this simple form of daily contemplation will eventually steal my dreams out of the hands of the Evil One and allow them once more to be gateways of God’s ongoing revelation.

Finally, this discipline puts the celebration of the Eucharist into a totally new perspective. Especially when it is celebrated in the evening, the Eucharist becomes a real climax in which the Lord, with whom we have journeyed during the day, speaks to us again in the context of the whole community and invites us with our friends to the intimacy of His table. It is there that the transformation of all images into the image of Christ finds its fullest realization. It is there that the unity with Christ experienced through contemplation finds its perfection. Daily contemplation makes the daily Eucharist a transforming celebration. When we live the whole day with Christ in mind and heart, the Eucharist can never be merely a routine or an obligation. Instead, it becomes the center of daily life toward which everything else is directed.

This simple discipline of prayer can do much to provide a strong framework in which our unceasing thought can become unceasing prayer. In contemplative prayer, Christ cannot remain a stranger who lived long ago in a foreign world. Rather, He becomes a living presence with whom we can enter into dialogue here and now.

The contemplative practice I have described is only one of many possible examples, and I offer it merely as a suggestion that points in the direction of a disciplined prayer life. The important thing is not that we use this or that prayer technique, but that we realize that the Christian ideal of making all our life into prayer remains nothing but an ideal unless we are willing to discipline our body, mind and heart with a daily practice of entering directly, consciously and explicitly into the presence of our loving Father through His Son Jesus Christ.
Conclusion
I have tried to show that unceasing prayer is not the unusual feat of simple Russian peasants but a realistic vocation for all Christians. It certainly is not a way of living that comes either automatically by simply desiring it or easily by just praying once in a while. But when we give it serious attention and develop an appropriate discipline, we will see a real transformation in our life that will lead us closer and closer to God. Unceasing prayer as a permanent state of mind obviously will never be reached. It will always require our attention and discipline. Nevertheless, we will discover that many of the disturbing thoughts that seemed to distract us are being transformed into the ongoing praise of God. When we see with increasing clarity the beauty of the Father through His Son, we will discover that created things no longer distract us. On the contrary, they will speak in many ways about Him. Then we will realize that prayer is neither more nor less than the constant practice of attending to God’s presence at all times and in all places.

Paul’s words to the Christians of Thessalonica about unceasing prayer might at first have seemed demanding and unrealistic. Perhaps, we can now see that they can be the source of an ever increasing joy. After all, it is not just a man, but God Himself, who invites us to let our whole lives be transformed. That is why Paul could write: “Pray constantly and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 5: 17).

~The Rev. Henri J. M. Nouwen was the author of more than 40 books on the spiritual life, including The Wounded Healer and The Way of the Heart. He would have turned 90 years old on Jan. 24, 2022.
Parish Office & Mailing Address
18 Belvidere Street, Boston, MA 02115
Hours | Monday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. & by Appointment
Phone | 617 536 4548; Fax | 617 536 1781
E-mail | info@stceciliaboston.org
Website | www.stceciliaboston.org

Parish Staff
Rev. John J. Unni, Pastor
Rev. James Shaughnessy, SJ, Pastoral Support
Rev. Mr. David A. Kiblinger, SJ
Leah Bennett, Communications and Operations Manager,
ibennett@stceciliaboston.org
Christine Burns, Digital Media Coordinator
cburns@stceciliaboston.org
Mike Currier, Reception
mcurrier@stceciliaboston.org
Mark Donohoe, Pastoral Associate
mdonohoe@stceciliaboston.org
Robert Duff, Director of Music
rduff@stceciliaboston.org
Giovanna Franchi, Pastoral Minister
gfranchi@stceciliaboston.org
David Girardin, Assistant Music Director
dgirardin@stceciliaboston.org
Lauren Healy, Reception
lhealy@stceciliaboston.org
Scott MacDonald, Director of Faith Formation and Parish Visibility
smacdonald@stceciliaboston.org
Colleen Melaugh, Director of Finance
cmelaugh@stceciliaboston.org
Thomas Mellon, Organist
tmellon@stceciliaboston.org
Lisa Pickering, Director of Facilities and Events
lpickering@stceciliaboston.org
Tim Rozier-Byrd, Reception
trozierbyrd@stceciliaboston.org

Hearing Assistance in Church
The church is equipped with an assistive listening system. If you would like to use one of the small receivers, please ask one of our greeters.

Building Accessibility
Both the church and Parish Hall Center are accessible by elevator.

Parking
There is discounted parking at The Hynes Auditorium Garage (located at 50 Dalton Street next to Bukowski’s Tavern), for $11, available on Sundays until 3:00 p.m., and $14 after 4:00 every day of the week. To take advantage of this discount, ask one of our greeters for a chaser ticket at Mass or ask a staff person during the week. Chaser tickets must be used at the machine at the exit gate. To obtain the discount, first place the ticket you received upon entering the garage into the machine, then follow it with the chaser ticket.

PARISH RESOURCES

Order of Christian Funerals
The parish is prepared to celebrate the Vigil (wake) in the church. Please contact the Parish Office for more information.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is the communal process through which non-baptized men and women become members of the Catholic Church. It is also suitable for those baptized in different faith traditions who are interested in becoming Catholic, or, for those who were baptized Catholic, but have yet to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and confirmation.

Care of the Sick
To arrange for the Sacrament of the Sick, for Holy Communion to be brought to those unable to attend the Sunday celebration, or for Viaticum for the Dying (Holy Communion for those in danger of death), please contact the Parish Office. It is always possible to anoint the sick during regularly scheduled liturgies.

Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Team
The CAP Team is responsible for training all parish staff and volunteers in mandated reporting laws and the Protecting God’s Children program (VIRTUS). They also provide consultation and support to anyone in the parish who has concerns about reporting child abuse and neglect. Please contact Lois Flaherty (loisflaherty@gmail.com), Maria Roche (maria.roche15@gmail.com), Letitia Howland (l_howland@hotmail.com), or Erin Young (erin.t.young@gmail.com) if you have any questions or concerns.

The Archdiocese of Boston has in place a vigorous program to protect children from harm and to educate its ministers and faithful about the nature of abuse, with a goal of increasing knowledge, creating a safe environment for children, and recognizing and reporting potentially dangerous situations. The full text of the policy is also available in the narthex and Parish Office, as well as on our website.

For Those with Celiac Disease
If you have celiac disease, please let us know. We have a supply of low-gluten altar bread available for those who cannot tolerate gluten.

Baptism
Infant baptism is celebrated on the first Sunday of the month. For more information, please contact Mark Donohoe in the Parish Office.

Building Accessibility
Both the church and Parish Hall Center are accessible by elevator.

Schedule for Liturgy
Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday | 8:00 a.m.
Lord’s Day | Sat 5:00 p.m.; Sun 8:00, 9:30*, 11:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m.
Holy Days | 8:00 a.m.
* Please note that the 9:30 Mass is both in-person and livestreamed.

Marriage
Couples who wish to prepare for marriage should contact Mark Donohoe in the Parish Office at least six months in advance.

Joining Our Community
We’re happy that you’re with us! Our community offers a warm, spiritual home for a diverse group of Catholics. We come from many neighborhoods in and around Boston, but also have long distance parishioners from around the country and around the world. If you are local, please introduce yourself to a staff member or drop in for coffee on Sunday. We invite both local and long distance individuals and families to fill out a new parishioner form on our website. No matter what your background or location, please know that you are always welcome at Saint Cecilia.
Your gift today provides low-income students in greater Boston with critical support during times of crisis. You can help CSF students thrive amidst the COVID pandemic. Visit CSFBoston.org today.

He has risen. Matt 28:6

“Handmade from the Flowers of your Loved One”
www.rosariesfromflowers.com

A Positive Experience for Those in Need of Memory Support
434 Jamaicaway, Jamaica Plain, MA 617.983.2300 • www.rogersonhouse.org

 Donate at clergytrust.org OR

A HALLKEEN ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY
352 Massachusetts Ave (Across From Symphony Hall)
Boston, MA 02115 • www.SusanBailisAL.com
617-247-1010

DONOR FELL THROUGH!
PLEASE HELP SAVE A LIFE 🙏
CONTACT: SAVELICIA@GMAIL.COM

KIDNEY TRANSPLANT DONOR NEEDED!
BLOOD TYPE “O” POSITIVE

LOCATED RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER!
SHOW THIS AD TO YOUR SERVER FOR 10% OFF YOUR BRUNCH AT SUMMER SHACK
50 Dalton St. 617-867-9955
OFFER EXCLUDES LOBSTERS. CANNOT BE COMBINED WITH ANY OTHER OFFER
For All of Your Real Estate Needs
Serving the Brookline, Newton and Boston areas
Eileen Strong-O’Boy
617.513.4343
estrongoboy@hammondre.com

Hammond
826 BOYLSTON STREET
CHESTNUT HILL, MA 02467

SPRY
COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL MOVING EXPERTS
Richard J. Spry
Parishioner
rjspry@sprymoving.com
Main: 781-933-8250
Cell: 617-538-9038
www.sprymoving.com

J.T. Electrical Services
Residential & Commercial Wiring
Please call Jesus for a Free Estimate

For Advertising call 617-779-3771
Pilot Bulletins
Saint Cecilia, Boston, MA 4338