

## *The Elderly Are a Blessing, Not a Burden*

Sister Constance Veit, I.S.P.

As the 20th century came to a close, the United Nations celebrated the International Year of Older Persons, heralding the vision of “A Society for All Ages.” The first years of the new millennium have been anything but that, with the abandonment of frail seniors during natural disasters from New Orleans to Japan, the legalization of assisted suicide in several U.S. states and foreign countries, and political rhetoric that seems to consider the growing population of seniors merely as a drain on our health care system and the federal budget. Is this the society for all ages we envisioned in 1999?

Rather than looking upon the growing numbers of older persons as a burden, Pope Benedict—like his predecessor, Blessed John Paul II—has called them a blessing for society. “Every generation can learn from the experience and wisdom of the generation that preceded it,” he affirmed in speaking to the elderly at St. Peter’s Residence in London.... The Pope insisted that “the provision of care for the elderly should be considered not so much as an act of generosity but as the repayment of a debt of gratitude.”

... We might also recall a bit of Biblical wisdom: “With your whole heart honor your father; your mother’s birth pangs forget not,” Sirach tells us. “Remember, of these parents you were born; what can you give them for all they gave you?” (Sir 7:28). Sirach admonishes us, “My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. Even if his mind fail, be considerate with him; revile him not in the fullness of your strength. For kindness to a father will not be forgotten, it will serve as a sin offering—it will take lasting root.” (Sir 3:12–14).

To realize all that we owe the elderly and to honor them as a blessing, perhaps we need to slow down a bit and look at each one as if they were our own parent or grandparent. Maybe we

need to see ourselves in them—for we too will be old one day, if we are blessed to enjoy a long life...

This October American Catholics will once again observe Respect Life Month. When we think of pro-life activities, we naturally think of the unborn, and rightly so. But this year, we would do well to reflect on the elderly—the contributions they have made to our families and society, their wisdom and experience, the care and assistance they need and the respect they deserve as human persons created in God's image. The U.S. Bishops...published a statement on assisted suicide entitled *To Live Each Day with Dignity* (<http://www.usccb.org/toliveeachday/>). It is a valuable read for anyone who cares about the dignity of human life.

As Little Sisters of the Poor, we are committed to the accompaniment and care of the needy elderly, following the advice of our foundress, Saint Jeanne, who said, "Never forget that the poor are Our Lord ... Making the elderly happy, that is what counts!" We are caregivers—not politicians or policy makers. But we do know that caring for the elderly poor is growing more difficult all the time because of funding cuts, a chronic shortage of qualified professional and paraprofessional care givers, and the attitudes of a society becoming increasingly callous with regard to the sacredness of human life. During this Respect Life Month we invite you to pray for the triumph of the Culture of Life, to advocate for better financing of care for low-income seniors and better educational programs and benefits for caregivers, and simply to cherish the elders in your own family or community.

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# Growing in FAITH™

Discovering **hope and joy** in the Catholic faith.

October 2014

St. Cecilia Church

Rev. James L. Secora, Pastor

## One Minute Meditations

### St. John Paul II

A contemporary saint, Karol Jozef Wojtyla was a gifted student but

worked in a quarry and chemical factory when the Nazis closed the University he

attended in 1939. Secretly he enrolled in an underground seminary and was ordained a priest in 1946. He continued studies after the war. In 1978, Karol became Pope John Paul II, serving for 27 years. Despite deteriorating health, he wrote 14 encyclicals, five books, canonized 482 saints, beatified 1,338 people and visited 124 countries.



### Feel discouraged?

Your life can be fixed no matter how bad it seems, but you can't do it alone. Ask for God's help and he will empower you to make the needed changes. All things are possible with him.

"In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence." St. Teresa of Calcutta



## The pursuit of happiness

Even when we have everything we need, we can still feel that our life is incomplete. If only we had more money, a better job, the right spouse, a nicer home ... then we would be truly happy. In fact, if we look outside ourselves, there will always be one more *something* that will seem necessary for happiness. Instead, look at being happy as a choice.

**Live in the moment.** It's important to plan, set goals, and prepare for the future responsibly. Yet always focusing on the future means missing precious moments that are happening now. Living each moment

as it occurs allows us to prolong its value and make it more meaningful.

### Live for others.

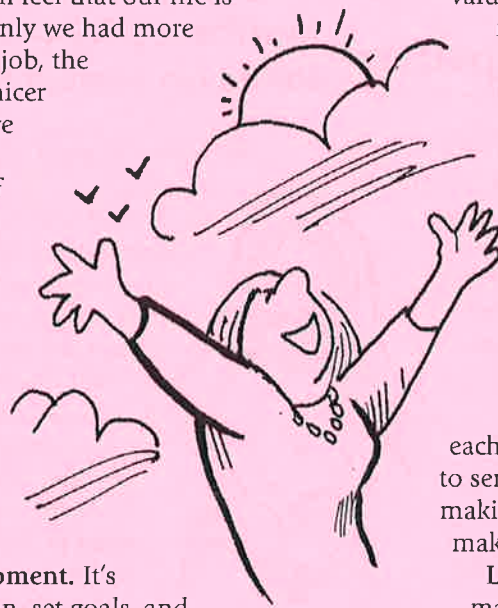
Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John

13:35). Jesus wants us to be his heart and hands to others and share his love with those around us. He has given

each of us gifts to be used to serve others. As a plus, making others happy makes us happy, too.

**Live for God.** We were made by God for God.

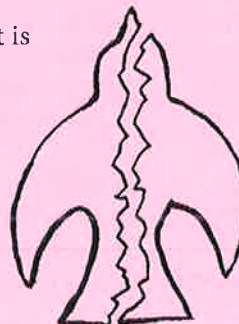
The desire for him is written on our hearts. He never ceases to draw us to himself. Only in God will we find the true happiness for which we yearn.



## Why Do Catholics Do That?

## What do Catholics believe about war?

The Fifth Commandment is clear that life is sacred and must be preserved. Jesus said, "if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39). As a rule, Christians condemn violence and promote peace whenever possible.



However, evil cannot be allowed to remain unchecked. Public authorities have the right to take actions necessary for national defense. Those sworn to serve their country contribute to the common good and the maintenance of peace.



## Will you know God when you meet?

Elijah hid in a cave, fleeing for his life. The Lord had promised to be with him, so he waited for God in the cave. A powerful wind, an earthquake, and a great fire all passed by the mouth of the cave but Elijah knew God was not in those great events. Then, he heard a “still, small voice” and he stepped out to meet his Lord (1 Kings 19:1-11).

**A desire for God.** How did Elijah know God was not in the powerful acts of nature? Elijah loved God



so much that he knew him well. He knew that God’s greatest power is in the truth of his Word.

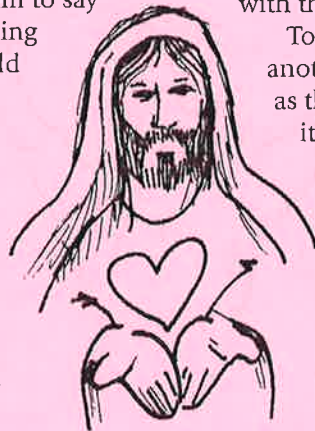
**A search for peace.** Elijah was in trouble because he had stood up for God’s truth. He defeated the prophets of Baal, who were turning people against God. Although a great victory, it earned him powerful enemies. So he turned to God. When our world is falling apart, we can always find peace in the protection of our beloved God.

### from Scripture

#### Matthew 22:34-40. Jesus takes on Jewish tradition

In their first meeting with Jesus, the Pharisees wanted to get him to say something illegal, something against Jewish law. It would be the perfect excuse to discredit him. The lawyer they sent knew that there were 613 commands in the Jewish law and generations of Jews had debated fruitlessly about which was the most important. He was just toying with Jesus when he asked his opinion.

Jesus silenced them all by saying everything starts and ends with love – love of God and love of each other.



Even the Pharisees couldn’t argue with that.

To love God is to love one another. They are as inseparable as the beams of the cross. While it is easy to love God, loving others is more difficult.

But true love of neighbor is measured by how we treat those who are neither family nor friends. It means including people when the natural inclination is to exclude or avoid them. Jesus loved

prostitutes, thieves, lepers, even his political enemies. This is how God loves and he calls us to do no less.

### Q & A

#### What does it mean to be like Jesus?

One reason Jesus came among us was to tell us about God and to lead us to Heaven. Jesus hoped we would do what he did.



For example, Jesus asked us to love one another as he did.

Some ways Jesus showed love were lending an attentive ear, showing patience in irritating situations, helping people make good decisions. Demonstrating love every day is imitating Christ.

Jesus had few possessions himself and sent his disciples out to preach with almost nothing. He didn’t want them to get distracted. He knew that the more goods we have, the more we’d think about them and the less we’d think about God. Consider getting rid of what you don’t need, and buy only items that replace what is worn out or broken.

Jesus often went off to be alone with God. Take time each day to keep company with God. Even as few as 15 minutes will keep you connected to your loving Father.

Doing these things are steps toward living like Jesus.

### Feasts & Celebrations

In October we celebrate the Rosary with the feast of **Our Lady of the Rosary on October 7**. The Rosary helps us meditate on the mysteries of our salvation – Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection. And we also ask for Mary’s intercession – the most powerful of all the angels and saints.

**Oct. 19 - Saint John de Brébeuf and Saint Isaac Jogues and their companions (1652)**. Six Jesuits and two laymen were unwelcome missionaries to Native North American tribes and suffered harassment and torture. St.

John de Brébeuf won the Iroquois’ respect with his courageous death. St. Isaac Jogues escaped but was murdered when he returned to his ministry.

**Oct. 28 - Saint Simon and Saint Jude (1st century)**. St. Simon was a Zealot— Jews who believed that the Messiah would free them from political oppression. St. Jude was a fisherman. After being called by Jesus to be apostles, they eventually ended up in Persia where they evangelized until they were martyred.



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## OUR LEGACY: GLORIFYING GOD



**Madonna of the School**

In 1946, the parishioners of St. Cecilia commissioned artist Christian Petersen to create a statue with the theme “Madonna of the Schools (MOTS.)” He first made a plaster maquette, from which he created the statuary group. One statue was of Mary holding her infant son and both looking approvingly at a trio of statues of school children pausing momentarily to pray.

On May 25, 1947, the one-of-a-kind terra cotta masterpiece was unveiled on the Lincoln Way church property just east of the rectory on a specially constructed pedestal. It received national attention and acclaim in publications of the 1950s. Later, it was revealed that parishioners William and Mattie Barr and family paid for the statues. Petersen gifted the maquette to the Barr family.

The Iowa freeze/thaw cycle of weather, pollution and vandals had taken a toll of the MOTS over time. In 1984 a local restoration project got underway. This project cost about \$5,000 and was completed in 1989 to prevent further deterioration and restore it to its original beauty.

In 1994, a former Ames resident, Charles Barr, retired and living in Florida, returned to Ames one last time to visit before he died in 1996. Mr. Barr and his two sisters, Florence Castonguay and Mildred Gerbrach, took action with \$35,000 for the future funding needs of the MOTS. In 1999, Florence donated the MOTS maquette to St. Cecilia (on display in the first history case near the office.)

Also in 1995, the Lincoln Way property was sold to the IDOT. May 1995, through a connection with the University Museums at ISU, a conservator was chosen to remove, restore and reinstall the MOTS on the Hoover Ave. property. In May 1996, in the yard between the Burke Chapel and the newly constructed St. Cecilia Education Center, the statues were installed on a new and similar specially constructed pedestal that cost \$5,000.

Due to concerns of the present condition of the MOTS, in June 2014, Francis Miller, who worked on the statue in 1995-96, was contacted for a new assessment and proposal for repairs of the MOTS. Based on pictures sent to him, his proposal was just under \$17,000 for cleaning and repairs to the statues and the pedestal.

In August 2014, Francis physically viewed the artwork with about 10 people representing the parish and it was decided that his proposed work would not be completed at this time. He stated that the conditions of the statues were in fairly good shape but need some attention in the near future. It was the pedestal that was crumbling and would need to be replaced, which would mean the MOTS would have to be removed and reinstalled again. **Ultimately, Francis stated to preserve the MOTS permanently, it would need to be moved inside.**

A new assessment and proposal on removal and storage or winterization of the statues in place was requested. The proposal was \$3,000 to winterize and \$4,500 to remove and prepare for storage that did not include the cost of equipment to get the job done.

### TREATMENT

A \$2,900 proposal to winterize the statues in place for now has received the necessary parish consultative groups and Father Secora’s approval before the freeze sets in. The statues will be covered with plastic piping and tyvek for the winter. A 5 Year Planning Committee has been formed to find the best option to continue the legacy started back in 1946 to glorify God through this priceless work of art by Christian Petersen.

### 5 Year Planning Committee Contacts

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