

Edith Bunker's Jesus Connection

Writer/producer Norman Lear died in 2023, leaving behind a television legacy that includes the iconic characters Archie and Edith Bunker from the series *All in the Family*. Inspired by Lear's father, Carroll O'Connor's Archie became known for his bluster and bigoted attitudes in the 1970's series. However, Archie could also be a three-dimensional human being with major flaws, as well as virtues.

His wife, Edith, brilliantly portrayed by Jean Stapleton, was Archie's opposite, a warm and loving person who embraced everybody, regardless of color or religion. Their differences were so extreme that Oprah Winfrey once asked Lear why Edith stayed with Archie.

Lear explained that when it came to that relationship, the writers always asked themselves, "What would Jesus do?" In essence, Edith saw through Archie's sins and understood the fearful, but decent man he could be underneath the bluster. Edith's love, like God's love, was meant to bring out the best in him and be his voice of conscience. So, the next time you watch an *All in the Family* rerun, try to see Jesus's presence in Edith.

Live in love, as Christ loved us. (Ephesians 5:2)

Creator, help me to bring out the best in those I love.

The Spirituality of Spring Cleaning

As the weather gets warmer and the flowers and trees begin to bloom, our minds can turn to spring cleaning. But going through all the items we've accumulated can take a lot of time, while also being an emotional experience. Writing at *Aleteia*, Daniel Esparza brings a spiritual perspective to this topic.

“Think of spring cleaning as an exercise in detachment,” he said. “As you sort through your belongings, be thankful for the abundance in your life and then ask yourself: Does this serve a real purpose? Can someone else benefit more from this?”

Items that hold precious memories should be kept and given due respect. Say a prayer of gratitude for whatever blessings a specific item brought you. Then, consider what items can be donated and possibly bring joy to others.

“The act of cleaning itself can also be a spiritual practice,” Esparza noted. “Think of dusting off cobwebs as clearing away distractions that cloud your connection to God. Washing windows allows you to see the world with new clarity. Offer each action as a prayer, a small act of service in gratitude for God’s blessings.”

**Create in me a clean heart, O God.
(Psalm 51:10)**

Help me find the spiritual side of spring cleaning, Creator.

St. John's Bread & Life

For more than 40 years, St. John's Bread & Life, located in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, has provided Catholics with the perfect charitable outlet for almsgiving throughout the year, but especially during the Lenten season.

Established in 1982, this nonprofit distributes "hot nutritious meals" to "1,500 people a day," as of 2024. It also houses a food pantry which operates like a grocery store, allowing "guests" to pick whatever fresh fruits, vegetables, and canned goods they want to bring home to their families.

In addition, for the past four years, St. John's Bread & Life has successfully hosted an annual fundraiser, with the dual goal of collecting \$40,000 and serving at least 40,000 meals during the 40 days of Lent.

Associate executive director Sister Marie Sorenson told *The Tablet's* Paula Katinas, "It really struck a chord with people, and we find great success running this campaign. People really...feel like their little bit is adding to making the world better for people in need."

I am the living bread...from heaven. (John 6:51)

God, may we value physical and spiritual nourishment.

Matthew Perry's Spiritual Road, Part 1

When Matthew Perry drowned in 2023, his death came as a shock. The actor, who had battled addiction for decades, finally seemed to be in a good place and had even established a new connection with God.

In Perry's memoir, *Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing*, he explored the roots of his addictions. Non-celebrities looking at his story might be inclined to think, "He's on top of the world. What does he need drugs to feel good for?" Yet in Perry's mind—even at the height of his success—he struggled with feelings of inferiority and not being good enough.

Perry also noted that he endured "a lifelong feeling of abandonment," partially brought on by his parents not always having enough time for him—and by his father actually abandoning his family. Without his dad around, Perry took it upon himself to be a soothing, entertaining presence for his mother, trying to make her laugh and becoming a "people pleaser." He went on to have decent relationships with both his parents, but that scared little boy inside him never disappeared.

Pray for one another, so that you may be healed. (James 5:16)

Remind me that I am loved and "good enough," Lord.

Matthew Perry's Spiritual Road, Part 2

As he got older, actor Matthew Perry kept trying to fill the emptiness inside him with sex and alcohol. He wrote in his memoir, "Whatever holes you're filling seem to keep opening back up... Maybe it's because I was always trying to fill a spiritual hole with a material thing."

Perry believed fame would solve his problems, so one day, he got on his knees and prayed, "God, You can do whatever You want to me. Just please make me famous." Soon after, Perry was cast as Chandler Bing on the TV series *Friends*. He reflected, "You have to get famous to know that it's not the answer. And nobody who is not famous will ever truly believe that."

While shooting the movie *Fools Rush In*, Perry hurt his neck, so a doctor prescribed a painkiller for him so he could get through his scenes. Perry described that pill as leaving him "in complete and pure euphoria...I shook hands with God that morning. Was it God, or someone else?"

Less than two years later, Perry was taking 55 of those pills a day, so it wasn't God's presence he had experienced.

All human toil is for the mouth, yet the appetite is not satisfied. (Ecclesiastes 6:7)

*Guide me towards true spiritual fulfillment,
Creator.*

Matthew Perry's Spiritual Road, Part 3

Actor Matthew Perry struggled with addiction for decades, and went through many treatment centers and recoveries. One in particular moved him towards a stronger spiritual life. While detoxing, Perry felt both physically and emotionally awful. He wrote in his memoir, "I frantically began to pray... 'God, please help me... Show me that You are here.'"

Perry then noticed a "small, golden light" in the air growing bigger and bigger. "I was starting to feel better," he recalled. "The light engendered a feeling more perfect than the most perfect quantity of drugs I had ever taken. Feeling euphoric now, I did get scared and tried to shake it off. But there was no shaking this off. It was way, way bigger than me. My only choice was to surrender to it.

"For the first time in my life, I was in the presence of love and acceptance and filled with an overwhelming feeling that everything was going to be OK. I knew now that my prayer had been answered. I was in the presence of God. Bill Wilson, who created AA, was saved by a lightning-bolt-through-the-window experience where he felt he was meeting God. This was mine."

**In Your presence there is fullness of joy.
(Psalm 16:11)**

Help addicts surrender to Your healing power, God.

Matthew Perry's Spiritual Road, Part 4

After experiencing that golden light moment, actor Matthew Perry stayed sober for two years. In his memoir, *Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing*, he recalled:

“God had shown me a sliver of what life could be. He had saved me that day, and for all days, no matter what. He had turned me into a seeker, not only of sobriety, and truth, but also of Him. He had opened a window, and closed it, as if to say, ‘Now go earn this.’”

“Nowadays, when a particular darkness hits me, I find myself wondering if [that experience] was just Xanax insanity...But quickly I return to the truth of the golden light. When I am sober, I can still see it, remember what it did for me...I was there, and it was God.”

“When I am connected, God shows me that it was real, little hints like when the sunlight hits the ocean and turns it into this golden color...And I feel it when I help someone get sober, the way it hits my heart when they say thank you. Because they don't know yet that I should really be thanking them.”

Come to Me, all you that are weary...I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

*May addicts experience Your healing love,
Savior.*

Matthew Perry's Spiritual Road, Part 5

Addicts never say they're cured, but rather that they're in recovery because they know that falling off the wagon is always a possibility. And so it was for actor Matthew Perry, who went on to suffer more personal and professional ups and downs. That doesn't diminish the epiphanies he experienced, though, nor the people he helped make their own way through recovery.

In an interview with Tom Power, Perry stated, "The best thing about me, bar none, is that if somebody comes to me and says, 'I can't stop drinking, can you help me?' I can say 'yes' and follow up and do it. When I die, I don't want *Friends* to be the first thing that's mentioned. I want [helping addicts] to be the first thing that's mentioned."

Perry's story of addiction is both a cautionary tale and, despite his sad ending, a story of hope because he fought the good fight and gained the wisdom he needed. Hopefully, in the next life, Perry is experiencing the unconditional love and acceptance he craved all his earthly life.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. (2 Timothy 4:7)

Help those struggling with addiction find fulfillment in serving others, Holy Spirit.

Superman Helping the Hungry

Everybody knows that Superman's alter ego is Clark Kent. But in Wallington, New Jersey, Superman has a different identity because Phil Stafford dons the iconic red cape with the "S" logo. Although Phil can't fly or leap over tall buildings in a single bound, he offers a lifeline to many people in need.

Ten years ago, Phil and his wife, Renay, founded a charity called N.J. Food & Clothing Rescue in cooperation with the food pantry of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church. Phil spends about 100 hours per week driving to various stores that donate food for the group to distribute to those in need.

The seeds of the Staffords' mission were planted in 1999 when they lost everything to the floods of Hurricane Floyd. They realized they wanted to help others in any way possible.

Phil told *The Tablet's* Alicia Venter that he puts on the Superman cape when making his rounds to lighten the mood of his serious work. But he never sees himself as Superman. He noted, "I have always believed in helping people. The Church has always taught to help people, so it aligns."

**He has filled the hungry with good things.
(Luke 1:53)**

*May my efforts to help others be super, Messiah,
while still keeping me humble.*

Priests Serving Youth in Wartime

The war in Syria has led to hundreds of thousands of Christians fleeing the country, reports Azré Khodr for the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA). Those who remain, however, have numerous clergy and nuns supporting their practical and spiritual needs.

Salesian priest Father Georges Fattal helps run a center for 850 youth in Aleppo, which is supported by CNEWA. He said, “Despite the risks, war, and death, we will never leave [Syria] because we have chosen to serve the youth.”

During his childhood, Srour Ibrahim found faith and companionship at the center. Now, he volunteers there, teaching catechism classes. He notes, “It’s the only place where we feel physically and psychologically safe, while everything around us is falling apart.”

Father Fattal concluded, “Some will always remain here because we are the yeast with which the dough is leavened...May God grant us the strength to persevere and remain in this land.”

**Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for You are with me. (Psalm 23:4)**

Protect those serving You in war zones, Prince of Peace.

‘God Moved Her Over’

When 46-year-old Elizabeth Ursin started attending St. Peter Claver Church in New Orleans, she found a true spiritual home. “I really felt the Holy Spirit here,” she told Christine Bordelon of the *Clarion Herald*.

St. Peter’s is also where Ursin got to know Willie and Faye Harrison, an older African American couple whose three granddaughters were altar servers there. Elizabeth soon made it a point to sit next to the Harrisons because she saw them as her “church family.” Willie believes that “God moved her over.”

The reason? When Faye mentioned that her son, Darren, was suffering with end-stage renal failure and needed a kidney transplant, Elizabeth volunteered to be tested—even though she had never met Darren. She was a match, so the transplant took place at Tulane University Medical Center. Darren said, “I definitely have love for Elizabeth...She is like a sister to me.”

Elizabeth concluded, “I am blessed that I was able to do this. God brought me to it and will get me through it. And He did.”

As you did it to one of the...members of My family, you did it to Me. (Matthew 25:40)

Dear Lord, bring me to it, and get me through it.

The Happiest Guy

At age 69, Michael has trouble getting around due to nerve pain and numbness in his legs. Though he receives physical therapy for the problem, walking more than a block or two in his Kips Bay, New York neighborhood requires him to use a walker. That makes grocery shopping extra difficult.

Thankfully, Michael is a recipient of deliveries from Citymeals on Wheels, which brings delicious food right to his door. In fact, when Michael heard that his older neighbors couldn't leave their apartments, he contacted Citymeals on Wheels to request deliveries for them, too. Today, they all enjoy and appreciate the marvelous food and service they receive from this indispensable nonprofit.

As Michael told the newsletter *Special Delivery*, he particularly relishes the holiday boxes he receives for Passover. And despite his medical issues, Michael does not give in to self-pity. Instead, he keeps his attitude positive and grateful, noting, "I'm the happiest guy you're going to meet!"

A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.

(Proverbs 17:22)

*Help me find joy, even in difficult circumstances,
Creator.*

God's Path of Totality

In April 2024, people around the country became fascinated by the solar eclipse and following its “path of totality,” traveling to places where they could see it in full. Writing in the Diocese of Albany’s *The Evangelist*, Mary DeTurrís Poust noted she found the event both “hopeful and fascinating” because it brought many different people together to appreciate the beauty of the natural world.

DeTurrís Poust also reminded readers that we don’t need to wait for events like an eclipse to treasure nature. St. Francis of Assisi, for instance, saw “daily reminders of God’s magnificence. Water and earth, air and fire, even death itself—all of it called Francis back to the Creator, gave him pause, and filled him with gratitude and a sense of belonging to something greater than himself, something Divine.”

“What if we chased beauty right where we are?” DeTurrís Poust added. “What if we looked at our daily lives not through special glasses that darken everything except the sun, but through the truth of a faith that lights everything it touches?”

**The heavens are telling the glory of God; and
the firmament proclaims His handiwork.
(Psalm 19:1)**

*Today, I open my eyes to Your glorious
creation, Lord.*

A Sign of True Faith

In 2019, Archbishop Molloy High School sophomore Ryan Curran was disappointed at his school's lack of a club for students who were "hard of hearing," like himself. He wrote about this dilemma in his high school newspaper, *The Stanner*.

Curran's story was then picked up by Dana McMenamin and Henry Ventura, two teachers who work at the Lexington School for the Deaf in Queens, New York. As Molloy graduates themselves, they were happy to assist Ryan in establishing an American Sign Language (ASL) club at their alma mater. This organization now boasts over 100 members and has hosted numerous events and volunteer opportunities.

"I always wanted to learn ASL in middle school," Molloy junior and club member Laila Gulino told *The Tablet*, "but my old school didn't have any opportunities to learn it. When I came to Molloy, I saw there was an ASL club and joined... Jesus teaches us to love one another and to treat others the way we want to be treated. Learning ASL has helped me follow those teachings."

Let the wise...gain in learning, and the discerning acquire skill. (Proverbs 1:5)

Lord, may we remember Your Word crosses all barriers.

Author's Journey Through Cancer, Part 1

Lisa Hendey was treated for breast cancer 15 years ago and has done self-exams every month since then. While doing one a couple of years ago, she didn't feel any lumps, but noticed that something looked amiss. Her instincts told her to check it out.

Lisa's doctor was reluctant at first, but agreed to her request for a mammogram, which didn't reveal any problems. But Lisa kept following her instincts, which led to her getting an MRI, which led to a diagnosis of stage three breast cancer.

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview, Lisa explained, "I was diagnosed with invasive lobular cancer, and it's a little tricky. Most women know that we typically look for lumps in our breasts. [Invasive lobular cancer] spreads in a way that's cellular, so it doesn't create a mass. It can be missed on mammograms."

"The doctor told me that this had probably been growing for at least a year, if not longer. By the point that we intervened, it was quite large, and I ended up having a double mastectomy, reconstruction, and radiation...It was really good that I listened to my gut on this."

Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given understanding to the mind? (Job 38:36)

Holy Spirit, help me trust my instincts.

Author's Journey Through Cancer, Part 2

Author Lisa Hendey's recovery from stage three breast cancer was more painful and slow than she had anticipated. She is on medication for the next several years, but finally feels like her old self again. Thankfully, she had support throughout her ordeal. Her husband, a physician, tended to her needs in the best way possible. She was also surrounded by spiritual support.

"If you're facing anything like this," Lisa noted, "I'd encourage you to ask for anointing of the sick. I'm at a parish with the Paulist Fathers here in Los Angeles...They surrounded me with beautiful spiritual care, both in offering anointing, hearing my Confession before I went in for surgery, and coming to visit me in the hospital."

"One of the most beautiful moments following surgery was my husband [Greg], who is a convert to the faith...brought the Eucharist home to me. He was commissioned as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. I cried big, fat, happy tears to have my husband bring me the body of Christ. That was a great gift. Our parish community was cooking meals for me...Mass was offered, and all kinds of things lifted me up."

**The Lord sustains them on their sickbed.
(Psalm 41:3)**

*Send me spiritual support in times of illness,
Jesus.*

Author's Journey Through Cancer, Part 3

During the times when she was feeling terribly sick, Lisa Hendey could barely muster the strength to pray. But she said she felt the intercessory prayers of others giving her strength. And when she was able to pray herself, the rosary was the prayer she turned to the most.

Lisa said, "If you're undergoing the kind of radiation treatment that I had, which was five and a half weeks, every day you're in the same place surrounded by people who are very ill."

"I decided I'm not taking my phone in there. I'm going to try to focus on praying. If I have to wait, which inevitably you do when you're in a medical care situation, I'm going to use that time to be praying for my fellow patients.

"I started praying what I would call a 'waiting rosary.' I would count 10 heads in the waiting room and intentionally try to, without looking like I'm staring at them, look at the people that were in the room with me and pray in that moment for their intentions. Then, that waiting time went by so quickly."

Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. (Ephesians 6:18)

Help me block out distractions and focus on praying for those in need, Savior.

The Healing Power of Prayer

Elizabeth Scalia acknowledges that following Jesus's command to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us isn't easy. It is, however, effective, which she knows from personal experience.

Writing for *OSV News*, Scalia noted that when praying the Divine Mercy chaplet for family and friends, she started to include individuals that she has pulled away from: "One day while praying, I realized that all my resentments had seemed to melt away. Jesus nailed it; it's nearly impossible to feel bitter toward someone when you're praying for their good—and praying 'mercy' for anyone is an unqualified good."

Scalia recently ran into someone against whom she had harbored resentment. After talking a while, she realized this person had endured some difficult times, and was now wiser and more humble than she recalled. Scalia continues to pray for her "because prayer is good. But now the supplication is joined to thanksgiving, because praying for the good of my 'enemy'—for the love of God—had cleansed away all the ache."

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:44)

Give me the strength to pray for my enemies, Jesus.

Jesus Conquered Hatred with Love

Jesus told us that we should love one another the way that He loves us. So, how can we carry out that command? Father Paul Kim, pastor of St. Raphael Church in Queens, New York, offered this reflection in his church bulletin:

“Jesus tells us that it is easier to change a man’s soul with kindness and love than to retaliate with anger or hatred. Remember, Jesus on the cross, after suffering through His Passion and nailing on the cross. People were still insulting Him and speaking ill of Him. But instead of showing hatred, He says, ‘Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do.’”

“I’m sure many of us, myself included,” Father Paul continued, “would use a few choice words to these people. I’m sure Christ would like to do the same, but He shows the world how we can break the cycle of hatred and conquer with love. He did during His ministry, on the cross, and even during the Easter season. Let us conquer the darkness in the world by showing the world we are not just any human beings, but as disciples of Christ, we are loving always to all God’s creatures.”

**By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
(John 13:35)**

Holy Spirit, give me the strength to choose love over hate.

The Power of Easter Hope

Though we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday, it can be easy to forget the life-changing implications of this unique event in human history. Writing at *Busted Halo*, Caitlin Kennell Kim offers these thoughts: “Jesus did not come to give us vague hope...He lives. Really and truly lives. Not figuratively. Not in some hyper-spiritualized, otherworldly sense. He is alive.

“In the days following the Resurrection, the disciples see Him, touch Him, and eat with Him. His body—the same body knit together in the womb of His mother and nourished lovingly at her breast. The same body slick and gritty with hard work at the side of His foster father. The same body constantly reaching out to touch, heal, forgive, comfort, and feed. The same body subject to torture, degradation, and death has been raised from the dead. Jesus has conquered death.”

“Jesus came to give us hope that is resplendent. He knows intimately the depth of the darkness we face. If we are brave enough and trusting enough and reckless enough to hope in Him, it cannot overcome us.”

He is not here, but has risen. (Luke 24:5)

Help me to hope in You, Jesus.

A Teacher's Heart

It was a typical Friday afternoon basketball game at Oak Park High School in Detroit, Michigan. Suddenly, the physical education teacher and coach, Alfred Kattola, collapsed due to cardiac arrest. Fortunately, high school juniors, Isreal DuBose and Correy Coleman, who had recently completed CPR training at school, were seated in the bleachers and sprang into action.

“I just knew I had to do something,” DuBose told *Fox 2 Detroit News*. “I began compressions... around two and a half rounds of compressions, the AED [automated external defibrillator] was brought, and Correy placed the AED pads.”

Thankfully, the two girls were able to restore Alfred's heartbeat before the paramedics arrived. Both juniors have medical aspirations, which Kattola intends to help financially support.

“What more can a teacher say?” Alfred told his students during their emotional reunion the following week. “You've always been strong-minded...Keep that confidence...if you've got a backbone like that, and you've got skill to back it up, nobody can stop you. I love you. Thank you so much.”

**The...breath of the Almighty gives me life.
(Job 33:4)**

God, help us to be schooled in life-saving skills.

An Earth Friendly Wardrobe

The next time you're looking for a soft, comfortable piece of clothing, consider wearing a tree. Okay, you wouldn't be wearing the actual tree, but rather a fiber called TENCEL, which is made from the wood pulp of trees grown in sustainable forests.

Produced by a company called Lenzing, TENCEL is mainly derived from eucalyptus trees, "but can also include wood from beech, spruce, birch, and pine trees," reports *Costco Connection* magazine. Because the resulting material is soft and breathable with anti-bacterial properties, it can be used for clothing, as well as more sensitive items such as baby wipes.

In addition, TENCEL's fibers are "fully biodegradable," meaning that if they are disposed of properly, they will decompose within 65 days, as opposed to plastic which can take up to 500 years to break down.

God calls us to care for His creation. Now, human ingenuity is allowing us to better do so, using parts of that creation. After all, as poet Joyce Kilmer wrote, "Only God can make a tree."

**Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy
before the Lord. (1 Chronicles 16:33)**

*Father, guide us in the caring and keeping of
Your creation.*

Writing for Better Health

Some therapists suggest that their clients keep a journal since research shows that the act of writing down thoughts and feelings can be good for your health.

Time magazine's Angela Haupt quotes therapist and author Alison McKleroy as saying journaling is "a beautiful radical act of caring for yourself."

It can lead you to discover if you're too hard on yourself in "self-talk." It can also help you think through problems and review past actions. Of course, the trick is to get started. Some motivational strategies:

- Name why you're doing it: for health, joy, personal growth?
- Make an appointment with yourself: tie writing to an established habit like during coffee or after a shower.
- Set easy goals to begin with: even writing just five minutes a day.
- Try different formats and tools: pen and paper, Notes app in your phone, audio journal, etc.

**Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you...write them on the tablet of your heart.
(Proverbs 3:3)**

Lord, support us in our attempts to improve our lives.

Waiter's Spontaneous Act of Kindness

As a result of his cerebral palsy, 51-year-old Lee Bondurant of Raleigh, North Carolina, isn't able to use his hands. So, when he went out to dinner at 42nd St. Oyster Bar with his mother, Linda, she began feeding him. That's when an unexpected act of kindness made both their days.

A waiter named Five noticed that Linda was attempting to feed both herself and her son during the dinner. Five "casually came over and asked Lee if he had ever had oysters," Linda recalled to *ABC News*. Lee told him he had not, so Five asked if he could serve him first, then proceeded to feed Lee himself.

In a Facebook post about the encounter, Linda shared that she was grateful to Five for treating Lee "with respect and kindness, not pity." She was also happy to see her son's faith in the goodness of humanity affirmed.

Hunter Correll, general manager of 42nd St. Oyster Bar, said, "We are beyond fortunate to have so many loyal and caring staff members." Regarding Five's actions, Linda added, "You don't find it every day."

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness. (Galatians 5:22)

Gracious Lord, help me do an act of kindness today.

AcompañARTE

From the time he was a child, Claretian Brother Manuel Benavides felt drawn to the arts, especially sacred art which he felt added beauty to the world. In pursuing his religious vocation, he studied mosaic and stained-glass techniques to “bring those who are far from the Church closer to God,” reported *Living Hope*, the newsletter of the National Shrine of St. Jude.

In 2014, Brother Manuel founded the AcompañARTE Cultural Center in Springfield, Missouri. AcompañARTE is a Spanish term, which translates to mean “accompany you.” The Center develops and preserves Hispanic arts, ranging from the visual to dancing to cooking. In addition, Brother Manuel teaches art classes and continues to produce his own mosaics, depicting images such as the Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Jude.

Father Javier Reyes said this about his friend: “Manuel is the type of brother who brings joy and laughter, bringing people together, even during the most difficult times. He is a bridge between the Hispanic and Anglo communities of Springfield by offering many opportunities to come together and celebrate.”

He has filled him with divine spirit...to devise artistic designs. (Exodus 35:31-32)

May the beauties of art lead me to You, Holy Spirit.

Doctor Treats Body and Soul

Dr. Youngjee Choi of Johns Hopkins Medicine was near the end of a visit with a longtime patient who had chronic health issues. Though doctor and patient knew each other well enough to have discussed their religious faith before, this was the first time her patient said to her, “Please pray for me.”

Recalling the incident on the website *Closer*, Dr. Choi wrote, “I’m glad she felt comfortable asking me to pray for her. In hindsight, my response, ‘Yes, I’ll be praying for you,’ may have been the most helpful thing I gave her that day.”

“In the medical profession,” Dr. Choi continued, “we often think we should keep our personal lives, including faith, out of conversations with patients. Of course, there are appropriate boundaries...However, in our work as healers, being prepared for emotional or spiritual requests may be one of the greatest gifts we can offer patients. This is perhaps especially true when there are limited medical treatments available. Being ready to respond when patients express an emotional or spiritual need can be an important part of the care we give to patients.”

I pray...that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul. (3 John 1:2)

Jesus, may my prayers bring comfort to those who need it.

The Work of Forgiveness

John and Sharon Echaniz endured an agonizing grief after their 23-year-old son Michael's murder. His killer was soon arrested and sentenced to 40 years in prison. John and Sharon found some comfort in justice being served, but they also recalled their Catholic faith's teachings about forgiveness. As John said in his court statement, he could not ignore "those pesky words near the end [of the Lord's Prayer]—forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

As such, the Echanizes told the murderer at his sentencing that they hope his heart becomes opened "to the unconditional love of the Almighty." At the same time, they acknowledge that true forgiveness is a process. They have not arrived there yet, but they are working toward it.

"Anger begets anger. Misery begets more misery; violence begets more violence," John told *OSV News's* Gina Christian. "That cycle can only stop one person at a time, one heart at a time. And each of us can only start with ourselves."

**In Him we have...forgiveness of our trespasses,
according to the riches of His grace.
(Ephesians 1:7)**

*Guide me through the difficult process of
forgiveness, Jesus.*

Down by the Old Mill

Many years ago, members of the Hellertown, Pennsylvania Historical Society decided to restore a local 18th-century gristmill that had been neglected for years. But they had a big problem.

Most of the society's members were older. While they could handle the planning and skilled work, they couldn't take on the heavy labor. So, the town's mayor turned to a group that had helped the community before: the Chi Phi fraternity of Lehigh University.

The 40 young men painted, laid brick and drainage pipes, shingled the roof, and fixed the floor and stairs. The mill was restored to such good shape that it became the site of the town's anniversary celebration.

But the cooperative effort did more. One student remarked, "At college, you don't interact with elderly people at all. But we like them, and they treat us with respect."

Respect is vital to people of every age.

You shall rise before the aged, and defer to the old. (Leviticus 19:32)

God, help us to respect our elders, our youth, and all people.

Sickness Didn't Limit Her Love

In 1952, Alberta Saar was told that despite an operation for cancer, she had only one year to live.

She decided to make the most of her time by visiting cancer patients every day to cheer them up. Sometimes, she phoned them at night to ease their fears.

Cancer had claimed Saar's own mother, father, sister, and brother, but somehow she carried on, not letting these personal tragedies keep her from her work.

More than three decades later, Alberta Saar was still visiting cancer patients. She had become a symbol of hope to the patients because she refused to give in to cancer even though she required treatment for the rest of her life.

When sickness comes, accept the physical limitations it imposes. But if at all possible, try not to let sickness dictate your attitude towards life.

**He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.
(Matthew 8:17)**

Help me to use my pains and struggles to bring comfort to others, Lord.

Soap Actor Models Leadership

Many people knew actor Bill Hayes from his long-running role as Doug Williams on the *NBC* soap opera *Days of Our Lives*. Upon Hayes' death in 2024, actor Bryan Cranston (*Malcolm in the Middle, Breaking Bad*) shared a personal memory of him with *Deadline.com*.

In 1980, Cranston was just starting his acting career when he landed a three-day job on *Days*. His first day, he recalled, was “a disaster.” Cranston had failed to set his alarm clock correctly, so he got to the studio two hours late and missed rehearsal for two scenes, which held up production.

During a break, Cranston retreated to his dressing room, feeling ashamed. Just then, Bill Hayes knocked on his door. Cranston assumed the veteran actor was there to chew him out.

“Instead,” Cranston recalled, “he said some comforting words, commiserating with my situation, and asked if I wanted to know the backstory to the character and the scene. I was shocked. He spent 20 minutes helping a stranger to feel a little less humiliated...I will never forget his kindness and patience.”

His mercy is as welcome in time of distress as clouds of rain in time of drought. (Sirach 35:26)

Help me be merciful when responding to mistakes, Lord.