

A PUBLICATION OF THE SISTERS OF LIFE / SPRING 2019 ISSUE

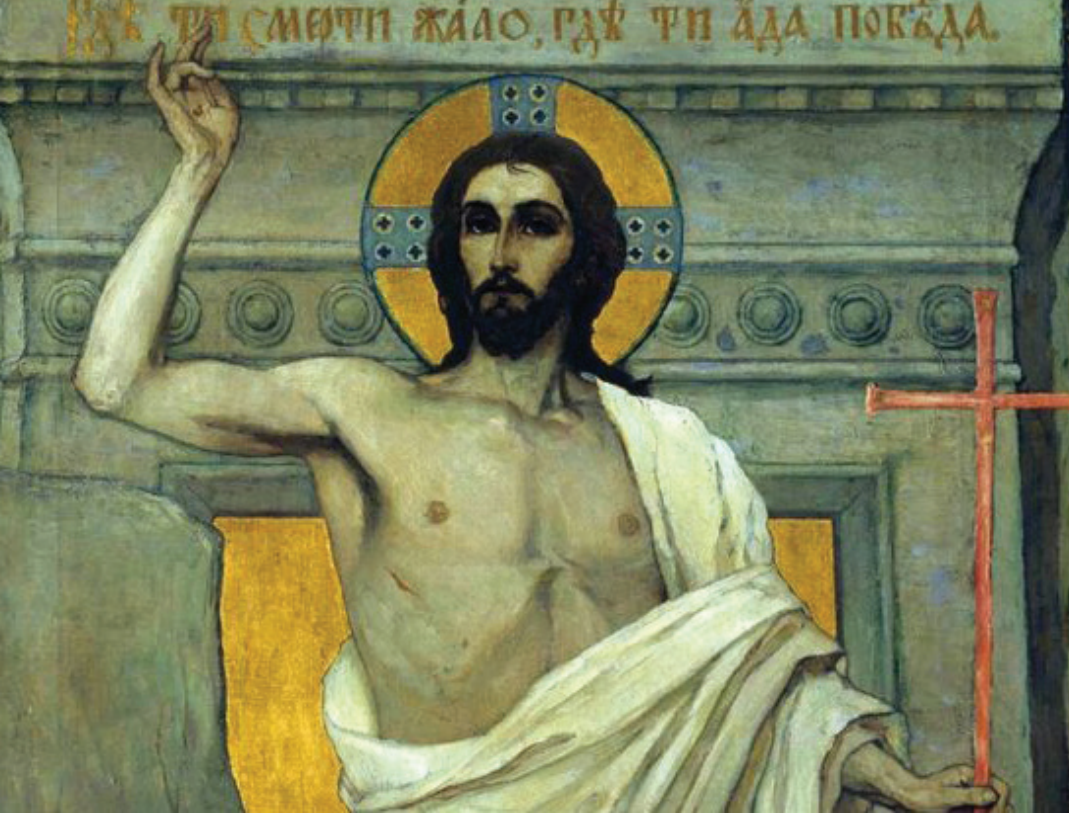
# IMPRINT

## THE DEEP HEART

*The Lord says,  
"He who believes in me,  
out of his heart will flow  
rivers of living water"*

*(Jn 7:38).*





Lift up your eyes *to be fixed upon His heart.*



If you travel today to Auschwitz I, a World War II Nazi German concentration camp, you'll discover that every prison cell has a story — a terrible and largely untold story of human suffering. In Block 11, however, you'll find two prison cells of unusual legacy. One is where St. Maximilian Kolbe gave his life in place of another man. The other, less known, is the cell in which Lt. Stefan Jasienski awaited execution after a failed espionage attempt. Upon the walls of this dark, bleak chamber, you'll find Jasienski's masterpiece: an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which he carved with his fingernail into the stone.

When everything else seemed lost, Jasienski clung to this heart, the heart that had suffered, died, and rose for him, the heart that gave hope and purpose to his own. The

Heart of Christ reveals to us our identity and our destiny. Our hearts are created to be places of light and truth, places where God dwells. Because of this, we are never alone.

As St. John leaned on the Heart of Jesus at the Last Supper, let us, too, lean our heads upon His heart, that we might know His faithfulness, even in the midst of darkness. The Crucifixion is not the end of our story. History belongs to Him, and His heart has triumphed over sin and death. We are a Resurrection people. Let us lift our eyes so that the gaze of our hearts be fixed upon His heart, whose love makes all things new.

Know that we will keep you, your family, and your intentions in our prayers.

In Christ, Our Life,

*Mother Agnes Mary, SV*  
Mother Agnes Mary, SV





J. Kirk Richards / He healed many of diverse diseases / Used with permission

# God has a human heart.

*And He is moved by you.*

## **Jesus chose to have a human heart – forever.**

Jesus really wants to be with us — in everything. He not only forever united Himself to our human flesh when He became man, He forever united Himself to our human experience. And He united Himself not just to *any* human experience, but to *my* human experience, going to my darkest depths and placing His divinity there. Loving with a truly human heart, He experienced all that we do, even the gut-wrenching things that seem to shatter the heart apart — grief, loneliness, and rejection. But He didn't live there. Instead, He lived in the embrace of His Father, with total reliance on Him. That's our path to freedom.

## What does God's heart really look like?

### **Jesus has a compassionate heart.**

*"And Jesus wept" (Jn 11:35).*

He wept over the death of Lazarus, was moved by the cry of the sick, and was filled with pity at the sight of the hungry, weary crowds. He is our friend. He cares about what we care about. His heart burns with love for us.

### **Jesus has a heart of light and truth.**

*"I am the light of the world" (Jn 8:12).*

Christ didn't shy away from asking His disciples hard things, like loving their enemies and leaving everything to follow Him. He sheds light on what it really means to be human, made in God's image.

### **Jesus has a gentle heart.**

*"For I am gentle and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29).*

The Lord healed those who came to Him with a simple touch. We're safe in His hands.

### **Jesus has a merciful heart.**

*"And the one who comes to me, I will not cast out" (Jn 6:37).*

Jesus holds out His wounded heart as a beacon of hope for anyone who has experienced heartbreak, rejection, and failure. "We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures," said St. John Paul II, but "we are the sum of the Father's love for us, and our real capacity to become the image of His Son."

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## Letting your heart be moved by Him, *the One who waits for you.*

Despite the pain that Jesus' heart experienced in being rejected by the world, He just doesn't know how to hold back. Instead, He continues to pour forth His love on the world with reckless abandon, hoping that you might return it.

### **He waits to see you in the Blessed Sacrament.**

Jesus longs for your friendship. He has made Himself totally vulnerable, poor, and intimately accessible in the Eucharist, so that you can be with Him. He thirsts for you, for the unique love only you can give. Spending time with Him in Eucharistic Adoration not only radiates grace to the world and gives life to your soul, but it gives His heart joy!

#### **Tip 1: Prioritize.**

*Find an Adoration Chapel nearby and try visiting Jesus as often as you can. Even ten minutes a week can be life-changing and will bring consolation to the Lord's heart. By making this act of faith and letting Him have all of your attention, you are saying, "You matter to me, Jesus."*

### **He waits to hear your needs and concerns.**

Jesus wants to hear about what is important to you. Like Veronica wiping the face of Jesus, when you look at the Body of Christ, wounded in its members, and confidently bring to Him in prayer all of the pain and sorrow, it moves and consoles His heart.

#### **Tip 2: Talk to Him as your best friend.**

*Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist. Bring to Him all the needs and intentions of your heart. He cares about you.*

### **He waits to encounter your look of love.**

Jesus said, "What you do to the least of these, you do to me" (Mt 25:40). Jesus is present in every person whom you encounter. He longs to receive your look of love, your kind word, your forgiving smile, your act of generosity.

#### **Tip 3: Reach out each day with acts of kindness to others.**

*Kindness transforms hearts. It helps others to tangibly experience the goodness of God.*

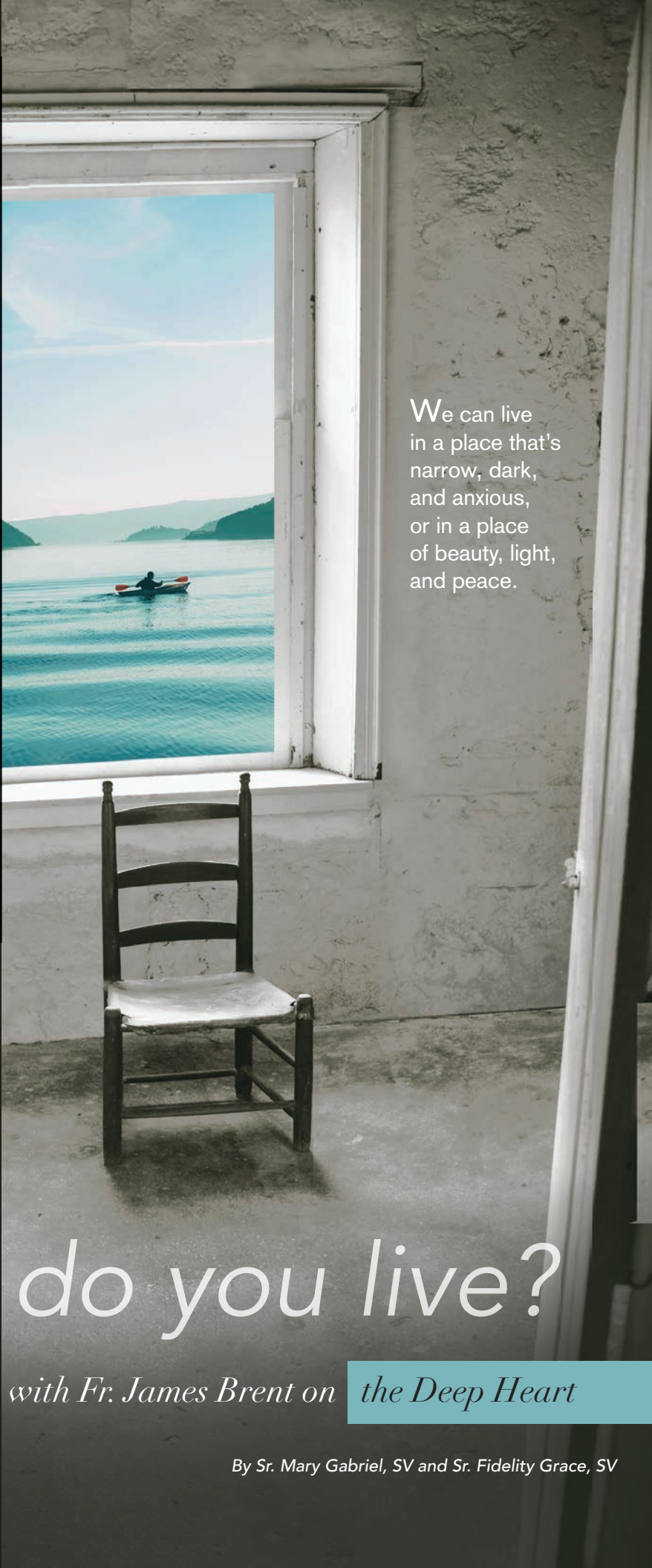
**Join us in praying daily the Prayer for Life.** (See back cover.)



# Where

*An interview*





We can live  
in a place that's  
narrow, dark,  
and anxious,  
or in a place  
of beauty, light,  
and peace.

do you live?

with Fr. James Brent on *the Deep Heart*

By Sr. Mary Gabriel, SV and Sr. Fidelity Grace, SV

## The Deep Heart



**Fr. James  
Dominic Brent, O.P.**

is a good friend of our community and has given us many retreats and classes on the spiritual life. Born in Michigan, he fell away from the faith for a time in college, but then he returned through his study of philosophy. Now a Dominican Friar of the Province of St. Joseph, he lives and teaches at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C. and travels the nation sharing the Gospel with college students and young adults.

### **Father, you speak a lot about the heart. What exactly is "the heart"?**

In a broad sense, "the heart" signifies everything inside of us, versus what's going on outside of us. But in a special sense, the heart is the most personal, core place within you — not just an affection or emotion, but the place where you are most fully yourself. It's the place of meeting God, the place of truth, of relationship, of prayer, of encounter, of decision. The heart is "the dwelling-place where I am, where I live...our hidden center, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth..." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2563)

### **Are there different layers of the heart?**

When we reflect on our experience of our inner life, we can find layers. The first is the basic, physiological layer — where we experience fatigue, hunger, thirst, disease, physical reflexes, etc. Then there's what I call the psychological layer around the heart where we find all our defense mechanisms, anxieties, sensory images and desires, patterns of reaction, our self-image, etc. But the *Catechism* says that there is a place within us deeper than our psychic drives, and that place is what I call the deep heart.

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## What do you mean by the "deep heart"?

*Psalm 64:6* says, "the heart of a man is deep." The deep heart is the interior place where God is and where our free response to God is. Living from your deep heart means engaging with God at the most profound level of your being. As you respond to God's truth and goodness more and more deeply, the depths of your heart open up more and more.

## Why do our hearts so often lack peace?

At Baptism, the demons are kicked out of our lives, and Christ takes up His place within our hearts, intending to shine out from us. But the enemy pushes back. See, the devil always tries to distract, dissuade, disturb — to get our hearts to look at anything but Jesus. So, the devil proposes disordered thoughts to the psychological area [surrounding] our hearts, thoughts that try to isolate us from others, instill overwhelming fear in us, or cut us off from God. Things like: "If anyone really knew me, they could never love me." "Is that really what she meant?" "I'm never going to change." Or, for example, we want to say a Rosary or something, but suddenly we think, "I'm SO tired, and I just can't. Besides, what's the point of praying if it's not gonna be done well?" These thoughts push against this act of prayer, against

Christ. We are bombarded by all kinds of thoughts, but that's not really you, that's not the depths of your heart.

## Do we have control of our thoughts? Do we have control of what we let into our hearts?

In our deep heart, we have a free will. With the help of His grace, we can say, "No! I do not accept this thought. I do not consent!" Then they don't come to define us. They'll keep coming, but we don't have to drink the poison. We don't have to accept them into the depths of our hearts. It's learning to live by His grace. But if we say "Yes!" to them and take them into our deep hearts, then they really do become part of us, and we can start to live out of them. But it's not just a matter of trying to batter off negative thoughts. It's about letting the living waters from the Heart of Jesus flow into our hearts.

## What if we have given into negative or tempting thoughts?

Then we bring them to the Sacrament of Penance. We need the blood of Jesus to cleanse our hearts. But if we want these things to be uprooted, that can be a long-term process. The Church gives us various remedies, like the Jesus Prayer, the Rosary, the Scriptures...Eucharistic adoration is especially powerful because you come before the Lord

who is radiating eternal love. He will work in this amazing way that's beyond our comprehension.

## What are the greatest obstacles to entering the deep heart?

Fear. Lack of trust. I think the modern world is built on the premise that God is absent or doesn't exist, or that He's not in control of the universe and it's all up to us. [We can sort of believe that.] Other huge obstacles for us are the profound disappointments in life — deep hurt, traumas, etc. We can be afraid to go to that place in our hearts again.

## How can the obstacles in our hearts be overcome?

You've gotta believe first of all in His presence and His love before you can face that stuff within. What is needed is a proclamation: Jesus is Lord! He's risen from the dead! He's active, He's working, and He will do incredible things if you let Him come in and bring you into your own heart; if you let Him love you, uprooting the bad dispositions and touching the places of hurt, pain, and sorrow. With God, there's a solution to everything.

### THE LAYERS OF THE INNER LIFE

#### The Deep Heart

*The place where God dwells. Living from your deep heart means engaging with God at the most profound level of your being.*

#### Psychological layer

*The place we find all our defense mechanisms, anxieties, sensory images and desires, patterns of reaction, our self-image, etc.*

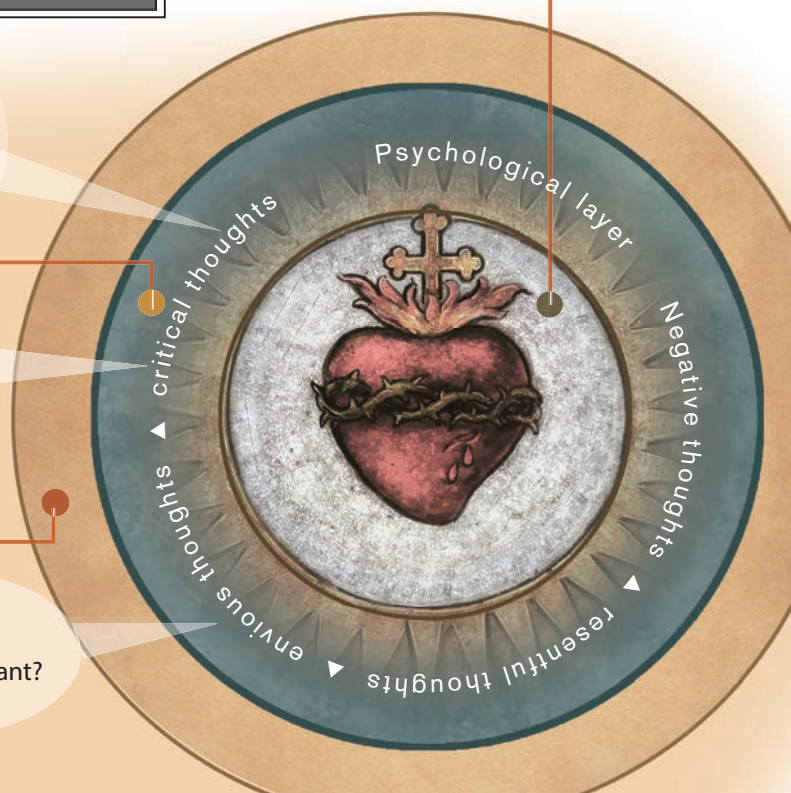
#### Physiological layer

*The place we experience fatigue, hunger, thirst, disease, physical reflexes, etc.*

I'm never going to change.

I don't have time to pray. What good is it anyway?

Is that really what she meant?





### **Do we ever have to be afraid of entering into our hearts?**

If you trust in God and His merciful love and saving power, there's no reason to fear. He's not going to destroy you. He's working for your complete recovery, even when it starts to feel like breakdown, hurt, and pain. That's real discipleship: when you submit yourself to the Good Physician and keep saying "Yes," even though the surgery hurts.

### **If our hearts have been wounded, how can we find true healing?**

To let Jesus into those difficult places in your heart, you have to ask. Invite Him. Try to name the difficulties and bring them to Him, saying, "Lord, I need Your healing touch!" For someone who has been gravely wounded, facing it takes a long time. Layers and layers of walls have been put up. They can't be resolved unless they're brought to light. It's sometimes important to have someone — a spiritual director, perhaps — who can guide you through the difficulties.

### **How can we become more aware of our deep heart and live out of it?**

One of the most important things for living and praying from the heart is the practice of recollection and silence. We're often just busy filling our lives with distractions. But when we enter into silent recollection, we begin to get in touch with the core of who we are. And there we find God. We are made to have our hearts fixed on God. That's health. That's life. Because of [Original Sin], we're all locked in a defensive posture against the world. The process of salvation involves letting down those defenses and being gradually convinced that love is real, love is available, love is true, that it's here for me. It's about undoing the self-focus and recovering the God-ward gaze.

### **What happens when we start living from the deep heart?**

Jesus says, "He who believes in me, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (Jn 7:38). He's pouring forth the Holy Spirit upon all who want to drink deeply of this spirit of love and truth and life. Like St. Andre Bessette or Solanus

Casey, you'll begin radiating the love and life of God, and it will affect the world around you. So, come! Come to the altar! Come all you who are thirsty, come to the water!

### **What does the Heart of Jesus tell us about our own hearts?**

The Heart of Jesus reveals who we're made to be. Our hearts are meant to be united with Him and to live the very life of His heart. He lives under that eternal gaze of the Father and His love. That's the Heart of Jesus...He knows this love, this reality of the Father, which is greater than everything else. And He wants us to share in this love. He summons us into the depth of life that we were made for.

“Are you aware that Jesus loves you madly? Beyond your dryness, beyond the stresses of everyday... He calls you by name. He loves you. He calls your name with every beat of His Sacred Heart. That's how He is...”

-Fr. James Dominic Brent, O.P.

*I fell in love with a God I never knew existed.* - Jennifer

### **Hope & Healing after abortion**

**Caroline's words:** *I have had a heart transplant. My old heart was withering, broken, and dying until Jesus gave me His, and now His beats for me.*

**Janet's words:** *I've learned that a truly contrite heart is a heart that has the capacity to be transformed, made new, healed. Jesus clearly heard my anguish and wished to heal me. Like the blind man, He made me see — not my sins, but rather His love and mercy. Praise God!*

**Jennifer's words:** *On the day that I walked out of the rectory after confessing my abortions to the priest, I fell in love with a God I never knew existed before. I became a new creation and the daughter He always had in mind.*

We journey with women who have suffered after abortion, to experience the love and healing mercy of Jesus.

**For more information about Days of Prayer and Healing, contact us at 866-575-0075.**



*A mission of serving pregnant women in need*



## Letting Her Live from Her Heart

*By Sr. Marie Veritas, SV*

### **The heart is where it all happens.**

In the heart of every woman is the longing to be heard, to be understood, to be believed in, and to be seen for her unique beauty and goodness, a beauty and goodness that often she doesn't see in herself.

When a woman finds herself unexpectedly pregnant, the fear in her heart can be overwhelming. She's alone; perhaps she's young, or her finances are bad, or the father of the baby is threatening to break off the relationship unless she has an abortion. Often, it can feel like her very identity is threatened by this new life she carries within her.

**We can help. Call us at:**  
877-777-1277 (USA)  
877-543-3380 (Canada)

### **What does she need you to do?**

**Listen:** Often, everyone else is telling her what to do, but no one is listening. So first, listen. Listen to her story, her experiences, her fears, hopes, worries, and desires.

**Notice:** She is good. She is a daughter of God, made in His image and likeness, unique and unrepeatable. Let yourself be honestly, spontaneously moved by her goodness.

**Reflect:** As you listen, reflect back to her what you are seeing and hearing: what she is saying, yes, but also her own beauty and goodness. She is not "a project" or someone to "do good" to in her time of need. After all, each of us needs to experience genuine love, someone delighting in me for me, not for anything I've done or haven't done, not for my education, not for my looks or gifts, but for me. A woman who knows that she is lovable and loved can do anything.

**Connect:** We are not meant to be alone. She needs a friend who will put faith in her and who will commit to walking with her in overcoming the obstacles, interiorly and exteriorly. This allows a woman to be able to choose her own flourishing, for herself and for her child. It's what opens her up to living from her heart.





## Johneris & Learose

I came to New York City to study acting. I was about to do my first off-Broadway show when I found out I was pregnant. I was so afraid. The first thing my doctor asked me was, “Do you want to have an abortion?” But something in my heart was like, “No, that’s not you, Johneris.” I didn’t know what I was going to do. My coworker kept telling me to have an abortion. But then I met the Sisters, and they helped me. And I worked really hard — three jobs — to save up money to pay for rent for the first few months after birth, so I could be home with her. I gave birth to the most amazing baby girl — Learose, the love of my life. I taught myself how to bake, to be able to work from home and provide for her. She is the reason why I bake...but at the same time, I discovered a passion for it. I used to be stuck in one place, but now, I am going somewhere. I’m so happy. The happiest I’ve ever been is with my daughter. I wouldn’t exchange this for anything. I decided to do the right thing. I followed what my heart was telling me: to have my baby. I trusted in God, I believed in God, and He provided.



► **Planning your next event? Check out Johneris’ baking:**  
[instagram.com/rosesmama\\_bakes](https://www.instagram.com/rosesmama_bakes)

## Leisure



istock: FatCamera

## What makes your heart sing?

In a time of trial, we need to remember who we are and what we are made for.


**What is your heart made for?** Your heart was made for freedom, glory, peace, and life. Ultimately, all of that comes from a relationship with the living God, the source of all life and love. St. Augustine said, “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

**What should you do in a difficult time?** It can be tempting to focus solely on the crisis at hand. But this often clouds the deeper reality of God’s presence and can lead to anxiety, even despair. Instead, we need to rest in Him; we need to remember who God is, who we are, and what we are made for.

**How do we rest in Him?** One way is leisure — **true leisure**. It does not mean simply having fun, relaxing, or taking time off. Born from a posture of receptivity to God and His gifts, true leisure is about taking time to do things that connect us with the Good, the True, and the Beautiful — things like true art, music, literature, and nature. They create a space for our hearts to resonate with God’s heart, and they dispose us for prayer. True leisure keeps the heart awake to the triumph of Jesus’ Resurrection. It helps us remember our identity, purpose, and God’s personal love for us.

Jesus desires the unique love of your heart, a love that only you can give. He wants your heart to flourish. Notice: What makes my heart sing? What gives life to my heart? **Take time to do those things that bring you life.**





**W**e recently got to know a guy named Scott Collier, whom everybody calls “Catfish.” He’s one of those passionate souls, who lives life the way great sinners and saints do — all or nothing. He’s done everything from living the party life in Vail, to praying in a monastery in Europe for years, to making a lot of money in corporate America, to riding his motorcycle from Denver to Alaska. A year ago, he was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer and was given just a few months to live. Life stopped, and Catfish began to prepare for death. We sat down with Catfish as he shared how, for the first time, he has begun to live life to the full. He shared his journey into the depths of his own heart and the mercy of God’s miraculous healing.

# Catfish

Healed from the inside out.



## An interview with Scott Collier

By Sr. Maris Stella, SV and Sr. Mary Margaret Hope, SV

### What was your experience of being diagnosed with cancer?

Before cancer, I wasn't really living. Christ says, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly," but I hadn't really experienced that. I had a steady job, a house, a car, all that stuff that you are supposed to have, but I was just surviving. I wasn't living life to the fullest. So I quit my job, and I gave myself two years. My goal was to figure out a way to live life to the full. I rode my motorcycle to Alaska, and I lived a lot. But then a year into it, I got diagnosed with an aggressive Stage IV cancer. I was told I was dying and had months to live.

A major part of being diagnosed with cancer was realizing that, even on a spiritual level, I was living off the poisons that had entered my life. I struggled with depression, and I had a lot of anger and resentment. I would go to Mass, but I would spend the whole time angry: angry with God and angry at people. I was feeding off poison and negativity. I had to try to change all that stuff inside of me, to get rid of all the hurt, the resentment. This was about healing everything inside of me, not just the cancer.

### That's not an easy thing, to reverse how you are living. How were you able to let go of the anger and hurt?

I knew, even before the cancer, that forgiveness was my major issue. There was almost like a block in me. It's not that I didn't want to forgive, but I just couldn't do it. I had to get the muscle of forgiveness to grow. It was a daily thing. I would take long walks and just repeat a list of people I needed to forgive over and over again. It's quite a process to go through. I had to learn not just to forgive but to find the good in people, and to live off that instead of living off of negativity. I started working with a counselor on sorting through the life experiences that triggered my depression. Once we figured where it was coming from, I had to start learning how to reverse all the attitudes I'd been living with. As part of my journey of healing, I had this overwhelming feeling that I should just go home and reconcile with the people from back home.

I had a good time with them, and I was able to see them in a different light. I don't have to distance myself from people just because they've hurt me. I realized I can spend my energy trying to figure out how people are trying to love me, and I can actually help them to love better.



### What did you learn about God from your experience of suffering?

I see God differently, and I see other people differently, too. I wanted to stop living off poison and try to live off of the truth that God is good and that people are good, even though they are flawed and hurt me sometimes.

There is a Catholic author named Fr. Michael Gaitley. I went to school with him, and he wrote me randomly and told me, "I want you to read my book, *33 Days to Merciful Love*." I was like, "Whatever, sure, dude." [But I did.] The first part of the book is about trusting that God is good. It hit me like a ton of bricks, and it's been a snowball from there. I realized that all my actions and desires in life had not been attuned to a God who is good. I had believed in a God who was demanding, judgmental,

One that I need to satisfy. I saw a God who was like, "You're going to suffer, boy. Carry your cross."

I would do the right thing because I was afraid of going to hell. I joined a monastery because I thought, "That's what you gotta do, to do it right." I was doing good things, but it was not out of love. Doesn't Christ say about that one guy, Nathaniel, "There is no duplicity in that man"? Looking back, I see a lot of duplicity in my life. There was some sort of love, or I wouldn't have chosen it at all, but my whole self wasn't there in that choice. It was almost like I was on the outside, looking through a window. I wasn't living out of my heart.

(Continued on next page.)

“I knew, even before the cancer, that forgiveness was my major issue...It's not that I didn't want to forgive, but I just couldn't do it. I had to get the muscle of forgiveness to grow.”

**It seems like you had been living outside yourself. You weren't connected to what you really wanted, to what was actually true in life.**

In this second life I've been given, I'm working on getting rid of the duplicity. Now I choose this life, not out of fear of being punished, but because God is good and loving and [what He gives is] actually what's good for me.

Yesterday was actually a perfect day of getting rid of that duplicity. I went to Sunday Mass, and, to be honest, I was annoyed with the music and the homily, so I just walked out. I was thinking, “You know, I could just go take a walk and pray, and I could probably get closer to God than being at a Mass that's annoying.” But then I was like, “No. If God is good then the teachings of the Church are good. And the Church says that I should go to Mass every Sunday. God has decided that Mass is a way for me to encounter Him, to worship Him, to give myself to Him. So I'm going to choose to go to Mass because it's good for me.” Then I went to a second Mass, and it was actually a personal encounter with God. So I know God was in control the whole time. I was able to choose to obey out of love, because God is good and I want to love Him. There was a tremendous peace inside myself. It was a tremendous shift. Maybe I should call myself Nathaniel.

**You mentioned that you were seeking that promise of Christ, to experience life to the full. Have you experienced that?**

That is what I'm working through now. What does that mean, “life to the full”? Is it going back to the monastery and doing it the right way? Does it mean finding the job that I've always wanted to do? I hated my job before, but after the extreme monastery thing, I was trying to do the normal American thing, selling insurance. There was nothing fulfilling about it [for me]. But maybe living life to the fullest is doing the same thing, but in a different way, in a way where your whole self is geared towards God. I think, ultimately, living life to the full is knowing that God is good, discovering the Father who loves you. Then everything, no matter what you do with your life, is fulfilling. I've gotten that principle down, but I'm still trying to figure out how that trickles down to my daily life.

I still feel like a walking tornado. One thing I learned with cancer is that God is always in control of everything, in the littlest things. Now I'm trying to learn how to trust that He's in control of the bigger things, too, like what I'm going to do with the rest of my life and how I'm going to pay off my credit cards.

**You weren't expecting to be here right now, this time last year?**

I wasn't expecting to make it through Thanksgiving. Then come September, I started getting more energy. I was feeling like a million bucks. So I asked them to check the cancer again, and it was actually shrinking. My latest CAT scan showed no traces of cancer in my body. There is no known medical cure for Stage IV cancer, but I am completely cured. It's astonishing. It's amazing. I've had several families tell me their children prayed for me every night, “Dear Jesus, please heal Catfish.” The prayer group at my parish tells me that I'm their miracle. It's humbling to know that so many people care about me and pray for me.

Once I began to forgive, that's when I think the cancer started shrinking. When I was first diagnosed with cancer, the health people told me, “Change your diet. Stop eating so much sugar.” But I actually needed to change my spiritual diet, not my physical diet. Even Christ said that it's not what goes into a man, it's what comes out.

**How are you approaching life now that you know you've been cured?**

I'm not in heaven yet, so now it's a question of transitioning to living life to the fullest, living with a God who loves me, living with people who love me. I had heard my whole life that God is good, but I now believe it to be true in my heart. And if God is good, that changes everything.





# Imagine

walking  
down  
a spiral  
staircase

**into  
your  
own  
heart.**

By Sr. Maris Stella, SV

## What you didn't know *the saints can tell you.*

Imagine walking down a spiral staircase into your own heart. You might walk past fleeting pleasures, distractions, memories of past failures, or anxieties about future performance. As you go deeper, you may pass the same markers over and over again, but eventually you come to a place where the ground is more solid and secure, yet soft and tender. This place has its own interior landscape where there are chasms of suffering, fields of virtues, pools of strength, and gardens of peace. It is a vast land which often remains uncharted territory. This interior landscape is beautiful beyond anything you've seen in the world because God Himself dwells here.

The saints allow Christ to reign in this kingdom within. They encounter Him in this deep, irreducible core and are nourished by rivers of living water. They draw from the deepest sources of grace and radiate light and hope to the world. The journey inward is not always easy. At times it involves facing deep trials and struggles of the heart. As we grow in knowledge of this landscape, we are able to gain greater possession of it and eventually make a richer gift of self. Self-knowledge leads to self-possession, which leads to self-gift. In this sincere gift of self, we find ourselves.

*(Continued on next page.)*

## Three saints of the last century

faced the trials of the day, finding their answers by venturing to the furthest limits of themselves, and finding there the only One who can say, "Behold, I am with you always." From this place, they have made a gift of themselves to guide us on our own journeys to the kingdom within where the Lord dwells.

# Guarding our Secret Core

*True freedom comes  
when we guard our  
hearts against lies,  
fear, and compromise,  
so that the voice of  
Truth can whisper  
and be heard.*



### Blessed Jerzy

**Proclaiming the truth of  
human dignity and true freedom**

Born into a deeply patriotic farming family in Poland in 1946, Jerzy Popiełuszko had a love for God and country. During his mandatory military service under the Communist regime, his oppressors sought to violate that most sacred place within his heart with cruel indoctrination and atheistic propaganda. His devotion to the Mother of God protected him.

As a priest, he became a chaplain, spiritual father and friend to the steelworkers and a champion for and inspiration to the Solidarity Movement, the peaceful revolution which helped bring about the fall of communism. He boldly proclaimed the truth of human dignity and freedom to the thousands who heard him preach, and for this he was continuously harassed by the government. Father Jerzy forgave his persecutors and even extended hospitality to the secret police who spied on him. He was eventually martyred by the communists in 1984.

The lesson Blessed Jerzy proclaimed with his life was "overcome evil with good." He did this by guarding his secret core and the presence of the One whom he knew dwelt there. True freedom comes when we guard our hearts against lies, fear, and compromise, so that the voice of Truth can whisper and be heard.





## St. Elizabeth of the Trinity

### Living in an invincible fortress of recollection

Born in France in 1880, St. Elizabeth lived through an age with an atheistic government and a Church that was plagued with scandal. She was an accomplished pianist and a lover of beauty, and she had a fiery temperament and a zest for life. She became a Carmelite, channeling all of her passion into her love for Jesus Christ and celebrating each victory she had over her temper. Guided by a deep interior light, she faced the darkness and powerlessness of her final illness by living in an “invincible fortress of recollection,” deeply aware of the presence of God through the indwelling of the Trinity. She would say, “Let yourself be loved.” Though suffering greatly, she died in peaceful serenity at the age of 26, promising to spend her eternity teaching souls to pray.

She said, “I have found heaven because heaven dwells in my soul.” She prayed that God would be a consuming fire in her and transform her entire being into love. St. Elizabeth found the heaven we all seek in this fallen world. Her prayer is worthy of a lifetime of meditation: “O My God, my Trinity, make my soul...Your cherished dwelling place, Your home of rest. Let me never leave You there alone, but keep me there all absorbed in You, in living faith, adoring You.”



## St. Brother Albert

### Giving God your brokenness

The life of St. Brother Albert Chmielowski, priest and painter, was marked by a series of apparent failures, failures that, when turned over to God, became the source of life for others. Born into a wealthy family in Poland in 1845, St. Brother Albert fought in the uprising against the Russians, lost a leg, and was exiled. He went to Belgium, where he discovered his talent for painting. At age 35, he decided to enter the Jesuits, but there he had a mental breakdown, experiencing deep shame and fear of a severe and vengeful God. He left the order and was sent for treatment for depression. After a conversation with a humble and holy priest, he began to see Jesus’ goodness and merciful love for his own fragile, broken heart, and he realized his weakness and failure were not obstacles for the glory of God. He concluded that either he could spend his life obsessed with his faults, or he could hand them over to God for healing and receive transformation and new life in his soul. His acceptance of his own poverty and his search for the face of Christ among the poor gave birth to a religious community, the Franciscan Servants of the Poor. He died on Christmas day in 1916.



## In St. Brother Albert’s *Ecce Homo* painting,

*Christ’s red robe outlines the shape of an enormous heart on His chest, covered in lacerations. The magnified, wounded Heart of Jesus is the center of the painting and of the entire world. This heart is much like Brother Albert’s heart, and each of our hearts, bearing the marks of suffering. We cannot live from our hearts unless we accept our interior landscape in its totality, including the rocky parts. It is through our wounds and weaknesses, surrendered to Jesus, that living water can flow.*

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## PRAYER FOR LIFE

### **Prayer for Life**

*Eternal Father, Source of life, open our hearts to see and desire the beauty of Your plan for life and love. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit so that our love will be generous and self-giving, and we may be blessed with joy. Grant us great trust in Your mercy. Forgive us for not receiving Your gift of life and heal us from the effects of the culture of death. Instill in us and in all people a sense of the sacredness of every human life. Inspire our efforts to protect and care for the most vulnerable, especially women who are pregnant and their unborn children, the sick, and the elderly. Strengthen us in the hope that with You nothing is impossible. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who by His Cross makes all things new. Amen.*

*Our Lady of Guadalupe,  
Mother of Life, pray for us.*

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Printed through the generosity of  
the Knights of Columbus. Written  
and designed by the Sisters of Life.

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