

IMPRINT

A man is sitting on a sand dune, looking out at the ocean. The sand is golden and has some footprints. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting sunset or sunrise. The ocean is a calm blue.

WHO AM I?

A PUBLICATION OF THE SISTERS OF LIFE / FALL 2021 ISSUE

Creation of the World



Dear friends,

One of our Sisters relates the first time she saw the Rocky Mountains. Driving west from the flat, expansive cornfields of Indiana, the first sight of the foothills caused an eruption of joyful cheers. The van then crested a hill, and a vast span of snow-capped peaks flooded the horizon. She fell silent as a beauty she didn't think possible opened out before her. That same night, as she looked at the multitude of stars in the sky, her heart was full of awe at the God who created such grandeur, and she felt so tiny in comparison. And then a beautiful thought came: "And yet He loves me more than all of this."

On this, the 30th Anniversary of the Sisters of Life, we marvel at the beauty of each human person made in God's image and likeness. Let us ask the good Lord to reawaken in our hearts a sense of the awesome dignity of every human life and God's intense, personal love for each of us.

Know of our prayers for you.
In Christ, Our Life,

M. Agnes
Mother Agnes Mary, SV



by Sr. Lucia Christi, SV

YOU ARE CAL

God dreamed you up. Uniquely you.

Our infinite and perfect God has no needs. He doesn't need you. You aren't a cog in a machine, a slave for labor, a robot made to perform a function. No, God doesn't need you ... He wants you! From all eternity, He dreamed you up, with all of your unique features — your eyes, your hair, your smile, the way you laugh, the things that bring you delight, the way your heart is moved in compassion and generosity, the dreams you have for your life. He thought of it all and fell in love with the idea of you. Something in His heart said, "I don't want to be without you!" So at a particular moment, in a particular place, He chose to bring you into being, breathing into you a soul that will live forever — destined for eternal happiness with the One who desires you and awaits you. He has called you by name, and He has called you into a relationship of love with Himself and others.

God created man in His own image ... male and female He created them. (*Gen 1:27*)



CONCEPTION **THE MOMENT**

you came into being.

Your life began at conception.

UNIQUE FACTS ABOUT YOU:

EAR: The ridges and curves of the rim of your ear create a particular shape unmatched in the world.

TOES: Toe prints develop at the same time as fingerprints and are just as unique.

EYE: A complex set of capillaries supply your retina with blood, making the intricate details of your eye totally unique.

VOICE: Your voice is distinct and different from every other person in the world.

BLOOD: There are between 60,000-100,000 miles of blood vessels in the average human body.

NOSE: The nose can recognize a trillion different scents.

TONGUE: Tongue prints are unique to each person, just like fingerprints!

LED BY NAME.

(*cf. Is 43:1*)

You are made in God's image and likeness.

This is the stunning truth: as beautiful and glorious as creation is, you are — even on your worst day — more beautiful than all of the wonders of nature put together! Why? Because human beings are the only creatures made in God's own image. He created us good, male and female: equal in dignity, but with the beauty of complementarity, made for communion with each other and with God Himself. Each person is a unique marvel, revealing to the world some aspect of God never before seen. And we don't have to do anything to communicate this goodness; we can't earn or measure our worth by any human standards. We don't have to create ourselves — all we have to do is receive the gift of our being from the God who only knows how to give good gifts, and make a return of love with our lives.

Out of all the beauty in creation, God desires to dwell in your heart. He longs for your love. He wants to share His life with you, to be with you for all eternity. How worthy of reverence you are! As St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote, "The whole world is not worth one soul." And the best part? It is true.



We wonder and create

Only a human person can
write and perform a symphony
inspired by the most profound
and sacred mysteries of life.

*O magnum mysterium,
et admirabile sacramentum,
inanimata viderent Dominum natum
iacentem in praesepeio!
Virgo, cujus viscera meruerunt portare
Dominum Iesum Christum. Alleluia!*

Magnum Mysterium

English translation:

O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see
the newborn Lord,
lying in a manger!
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb
was worthy to bear
the Lord, Jesus Christ.
Alleluia!

What makes you different from the rest of the universe?

You are made in God's image

by Sr. Beata Victoria, SV and Sr. Marie Veritas, SV

Life is an incredible gift flowing from God. Everything that exists participates in and comes forth from the being of God. Participation in God's being is what makes a thing to be alive. So, what makes humans different from other living things?

How are we similar to plants and animals?

Plants, animals, and humans each possess the most basic requirements to sustain life: the power to eat, grow, and reproduce. Animals and humans have the added powers of being able to move on their own, as well as use their senses and feel emotions.

So, for example, a plant in the desert will spread its roots toward water and wilt in the heat. Animals and humans, meanwhile, experience discomfort and go toward what will satiate their needs: shade, water, and food. But a human person in the desert operates on an even more profound level — in addition to feeling the deep sorrow of loneliness, the fear of death and thoughts of what lies beyond, or the anticipation of reuniting with a loved one, he/she might also pull out a map, snap some photos, gather firewood in anticipation of the cold desert night, and pray to God for protection.

● We marvel, ponder, create, adore:

Only a human person can wonder at, uncover, and develop the mystery of created things through film, science, and technology. Only a human person can write and perform a symphony inspired by the adventure of love or the sorrow of loss. And only a human person can look upon the beauty of creation and worship God for what He has made.

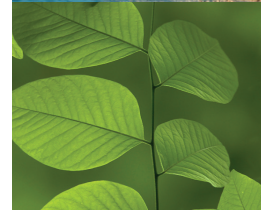
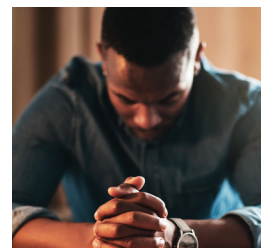
Why? Because of all creation, only the human person is made in the image and likeness of Almighty God. Man is “the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 24). Unlike animals and plants, the human person is an embodied, immortal, rational soul. We unite the spiritual and material worlds; we are spiritual animals. Thus, only the human person possesses an

intellect and a will, which make us uniquely able to strive for an end that goes beyond simple survival. We have the innate desire to know God, to love Him, and to choose to follow Him into eternity.

● **Freedom to choose:** The desire for God that is written on every human heart sets us apart because it contains within it an invitation to love. “We love because He first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). Love is not a feeling, nor is it simply an attraction to some perceived good. Love is a choice, a participation in which we engage with the freedom of our will.

● **Only human persons have the capacity to love and to sin:** The capacity to actually enter into God's own love by grace is what sets humans apart and gives meaning and purpose to our lives. We are made for communion and experience freedom and peace when we choose to live in right relationship with God and others. However, we can also freely choose to sin — that is, we can choose against God and, consequently, against our true good. That's why we human beings were the ones who crucified Jesus — not the plants or the animals. Only we could choose to act against our Creator.

● **His choice of us:** And that's exactly why Jesus became man, was crucified, and rose — to save us human persons from the sin and eternal death of which only we are capable. Jesus' self-gift of love shows us that no matter what our physical or intellectual capacities are, or what mistakes we've made in our lives, we have dignity because we are loved, chosen, and willed by God, who made us for eternal communion with Him in heaven. The love, healing, and salvation He offers us through His Body and Blood are meant to overflow and draw the whole world to His heart.





Sr. Mary Casey, SV shares about the gift of her twin sister, Casey, who has Down Syndrome.

MY TWIN SISTER, CASEY

"I'm here!" She flung the door open, crossed the threshold, threw her head back, and opened her arms in the air to proclaim her arrival. Only moments before, I had reminded her that the Sisters were not expecting guests, and I had encouraged her to enter the convent quietly and follow my lead. My warning was in response to the previous day, when she had opened the door and ran full speed ahead into the arms of the first Sister she saw. (After the long embrace, I did what anyone would do ... I introduced them to each other.) So, on day two of visiting, I was not surprised that my subtle reminder and directive fell on deaf ears as she ran past me and busted through the door. She was altogether confident and unafraid. On the other side of that door there was love waiting to be given and received. She intended to love whomever she would meet and was downright certain that someone would be eager to love her in return.

A Sister once asked Casey what her thoughts were when she found out that she was a twin. Without a moment's hesitation, she exclaimed, "I was so excited because I always wanted to be a twin!" Twins indeed! Casey stops at nothing to announce to perfect strangers that we are twins. Ever since I joined the convent and formally took part of her name, "Casey," she has become certain that we are now more twins than ever before and introduces herself as "Casey Mary." (Any effort to avoid this slightly awkward occurrence has proven useless, so now I simply step back and let the moment unfold.)

Truth be told, I wish that everyone had a “Casey” in their life — a constant friend, an unwavering companion, a trustworthy refuge. I often reflect on how the Lord has revealed Himself to me through Casey over the years. Without a doubt, Casey has been a tremendous channel of His love and self-disclosure. In her, I have been told that I am loved and lovable. I have encountered a love that does not change its mind. I have experienced a love that never negotiates. I have been forgiven before I even ask. I have tasted simplicity and been humbled amidst the web of my own complications. I have been affirmed when I feel anything but worthy. I have been loved simply for who I am. In her estimation, my failures and accomplishments, shortcomings and successes are as nothing. Through Casey, I have been seen, chosen, and desired as I am. How much *more* in the eyes of the Good Father?

Our childhood years were colored by my “inspired ideas,” which generally included, but were not limited to: the both of us, a couple of bike helmets, and a precautionary landing zone made of pillows. I don’t recall the moment that my innocence was shattered — the moment that I realized that Casey was different and other people noticed. I just know that in a split second, my heart was awakened to reality. I became over-protective and defensive in the face of anything that could hurt her. I wanted desperately to shield her from the pending threat of rejection. But as life carried on, I was forced to come to terms with the fact that the world is simply a tough

place. Suffering is real. Life can be cruel. And the loudest voices often write the rulebook.

Not too long ago, I learned about a country that was celebrating the near elimination of children born with Down Syndrome, and that many countries have joined forces. But this is nothing to celebrate. What a loss to the world, what a grievance to the very heart of God! I can’t help but recall the words Jesus spoke from the cross, “Father forgive them, they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). If they only knew ... if only we knew.

The world has long sought to define a person according to their talents and treasures, their gifts and abilities. But we are more than we can do, produce, or achieve. Casey has accepted her God-given mission — the simple truth that her love is powerful. Her love knows no bias, sees no weakness, and fears nothing. Her love does not calculate or demand. Her love just gives, and she is on a mission to find the one in need.

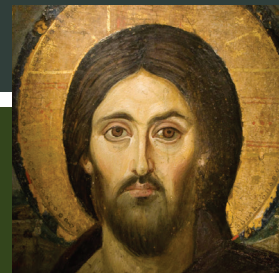
A few weeks ago I witnessed her love released on the women I live with at our Holy Respite. Casey was in New York City for a brief moment and was eager to visit the convent. She set foot in the door and was off to the races. One by one she approached each mother and asked her what she needed prayers for. Over one mother she prayed for a miracle; over another she prayed for peace. She went from mom, to baby, to mom, to baby ... and love was unleashed — the love that simply says, “You are good, and you matter!”

I wish everyone had a Casey in their life. By no merit of my own, I have been given a treasure beyond value in the gift of my twin sister, Casey Mary.



EVERY PERSON ...
IS SPARKED WITH
DIVINITY, COMES FROM
THE HAND OF GOD, [AND]
BREATHES THE BREATH
THAT GOD HAS GIVEN.

- John Cardinal O'Connor

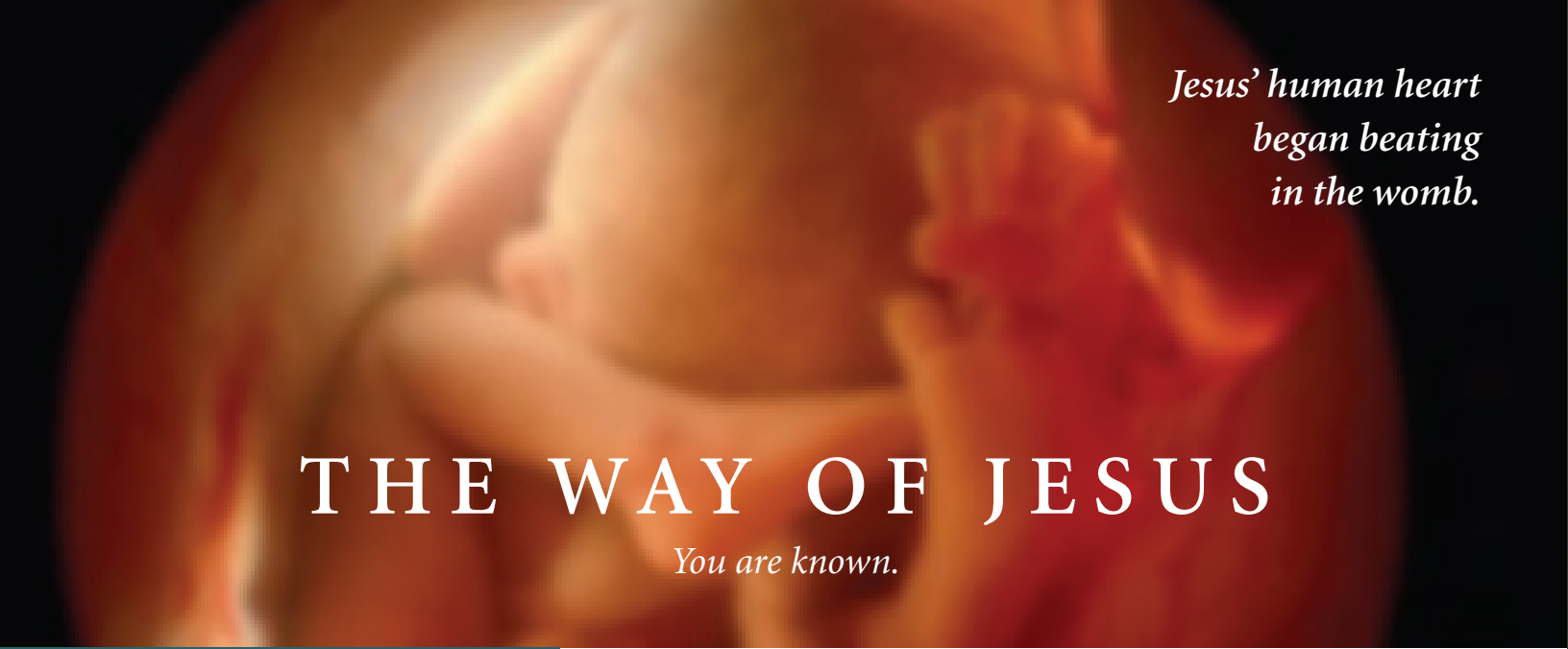


Unmasking the lie:

We can doubt our own worth or that our love matters. We can begin to measure ourselves by our achievements and also our failures, judging ourselves in comparison with others. We can hear the voice, “You aren’t good enough. You will never make a difference. You are nothing.”

THE REALITY:

You have a unique and unrepeatable love to give, which cannot simply be measured by human standards. No one can love as you do. Your love is powerful and changes the course of others’ lives. No one can ever take your place. You will never cease to be important to the heart of God.



*Jesus' human heart
began beating
in the womb.*

THE WAY OF JESUS

You are known.

THE UNBORN JESUS

Have you ever considered this startling, breathtaking reality: God, the Creator of heaven and earth, entered our world as an embryo like you and me? Cell by cell, He developed in the womb of His mother, Mary. Why would God do this?

From all eternity, God's radical love and desire to be in an intimate relationship with each of us impelled Him to take on human flesh. Jesus, the second person of the Holy Trinity, came to experience everything with His creatures — from conception, to ordinary life, to suffering, to glory.

Through His life and death, "Jesus reveals the face of His Father and hands over to us human beings the task of discovering our own faces ... I have a unique way of keeping God's image in me, configuring myself to Christ and being fruitful" (*Fr. Jacques Phillipe*). The unique way God loves me, and the way I love Him and the world He created, reveals an essential part of who I am.

"...though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:6-7).

YOUR BEGINNING: What happens in the womb?

First 20 Days: Heart and eyes begin to form. Brain, spinal column, and nervous system are quickly developing.

21 Days: Heart begins to beat.

35 Days: Mouth, ears, nose, and limbs are forming.

42 Days: Skeleton is basically formed. Fingers begin to form.

43 Days: Brain waves are detectable.

7 Weeks: Elbows are visible, and eyelids form.

8 Weeks: Except for the lungs, all organs are complete and functioning. Fingerprints begin to develop.

10 Weeks: Baby is sensitive to touch. Baby swallows and makes facial expressions.

12 Weeks: Baby is active in the womb, moving his hands and feet.

13 Weeks: Vocal chords are present and external sex organs are apparent.

18 Weeks: Baby begins to hear, and his digestive system begins to function.

20 Weeks: Eyebrows are visible.

23 Weeks: Baby can dream (indicated by Rapid Eye Movements [REM]).


5 Months: Baby will react negatively to loud noises and respond positively to soft music.

6 Months: Most babies are viable. Fine hair and eyelashes are present.


7 Months: Baby's eyes can open and close. Baby can recognize his mother's voice.

8 Months: Rapid growth. Weight increases to over four pounds.

9 Months: Baby gains an ounce of weight daily. Hormones from the baby cause labor in his mother.



In Baptism,
you have been marked
with the beauty of love.
You are a citizen of heaven.
Go and claim
your inheritance.



You are claimed by love.

by Sr. Beata Victoria, SV

"I've done a lot of bad things in my life and made a lot of mistakes, but today ... it all starts over."

I tried to suppress my laughter as I chatted with a five-year-old just before his Baptism.

"You bet it does," I responded.

My young friend had grasped a deep truth in a way that only the pure heart of a child can: Baptism makes us brand new. In its cleansing from the stain of original sin, Baptism claims us as children of God the Father and citizens of heaven.

"What color is my marking?" my same young friend asked, as I told him about God placing a mark on his soul that would forever indicate to Whom he belongs. "I hope mine is orange."

Although invisible in physical terms, the transformation of a soul in Baptism is total and irreversible. Hidden in the quiet of our hearts is the presence of Someone. As baptized Christians, we are never alone. Our souls are wed to an Eternal Love beyond our wildest imaginings. Nothing we can do will ever cause Him to take back His love. It will never diminish, or fade, or depart. Nothing else will satisfy a heart that is made for and claimed by this love.

Now, it's true — we will often fall short of this love. We will make mistakes and do bad things. We can cut ourselves off from love, but He never ceases to pursue our hearts, in order that we might be restored to grace. He never tires to beckon us home to the love we were made for, the love that is promised to us. Every time we turn back to the Lord and seek His forgiveness, we are restored to the life of grace. A fresh start is always possible thanks to the mercy of God.

This is the marvelous brilliance of God's redeeming and victorious love. It draws forth beauty in every shade and color. We sell ourselves short when we live in darkness. His vision for us is radiant.



MY DAUGHTER, EMMA

Laura's Story*

When I found out I was pregnant, it wasn't a joyous occasion for me. I was scared to have the baby and scared not to have the baby. If you had asked me a couple of years ago if I was pro-life, I would have said, "Sure." But when you find yourself in a situation where you could possibly lose your house, lose the ability to feed the three children that you already have — now all of a sudden your morals are really put into question.

But I knew if I didn't have the baby, I'd be left with shame and regret for the rest of my life. I have had an abortion before; it's not something I'm proud of. I would often cry about the baby that I lost. I think it was probably out of guilt that I got pregnant again. I was hoping my boyfriend would be happy, because he had told me that he wished we had kept the other baby. But there was also a lot of shame in having a baby, too. I was afraid of how the community would view me.

I asked my boyfriend, "What do you want me to do?" And he kept saying, "It's your choice." It just didn't seem fair. [It was our baby,] but now it was all on my shoulders. I think what I really wanted to hear was, "I'll be with you every step of the way, no matter what!" I felt that there was no good option, and I didn't know what to do.

So I made an appointment at the abortion clinic. I begged them to let me take the abortion pills home because I wasn't 100% sure what I was going to do. I put them in the cupboard, and I would take them out and look at them. I even took them out of the package, and I held them in my hand. But I just couldn't do it.

I reached out to an online group called "I Regret my Abortion." A man connected me with the Sisters of Life, who offered that support that I had been looking for. They called me every other day when I was scared and trying to make up my mind. They kept pouring life into me and saying, "You can do this." But I wanted to know how, because on paper there was no way I was going to be able to afford to have a baby. They just said, "We can't tell you how — but we know that God provides."

I took a leap of faith and destroyed the abortion pills. I said, "Welcome to the world, little one. I don't know how I'm going to feed you; I don't know how I'm going to keep my house, but God does, and that's all I need to know." But in other moments I would think, "What did I just do? I just flushed my life down the toilet." The anxiety was paralyz-

ing. I still had bills to pay. I was still working 60 hours a week at a factory.

One day, when I was really struggling, I told the Sisters that it was my dream to get out of the factory. It was physically taxing. The Sisters encouraged me to go back to school, so I applied. I just wanted to see if I would get in; I never thought I'd actually go. It seemed impossible with a baby on the way.

Although I was accepted into the program, I continued working at the factory. When September rolled around, I could no longer stand for a 12-hour shift, and so my doctor qualified me for short-term disability. That freed up the time for me to start school. While waiting for my first disability paycheck, I received a scholarship grant just when I needed it. The timing was amazing. I completed my first semester, and then gave birth during my Christmas break.

I never would have thought in a million years that things would just fall into place for me like that. I had to get the brakes done on my van, and miraculously I got the exact cost sent to me from a government grant. I was worried that I didn't have enough baby things. But when the Sisters came to visit me, they had the whole room full of gifts for me and the baby. I was bawling when I saw it. The Catholic ladies in my town did a diaper shower. They figured out how many diapers a child would need from birth and gave them all to me. The community here has really stepped up in so many ways. There is a woman who would come over and just hold my baby so I could do my school work.

My friend, the one who reached out to me online, was inspired to send me a Bible passage from Hosea: "I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards, and

make the Valley of Achor a door of hope" (Hos 2:14-15). That same day, I was speaking to Sr. Mary Grace on the phone, and when I read it out loud there was dead silence, and then Sister said, "That is the Scripture I was praying with this morning."

I always believed God existed, but I never felt His presence until things like this started happening. I was raised going to Church, but I was lukewarm and just did my own thing. So for Him to pour out grace on me ... Why? Why me? There are really good people out there who didn't mess up! But it's just nice to know even when you do mess up, He's still there; He still loves you. I know now that nothing I can do will make Him love me more or less.

If you had asked me last year to write the script of how my year was going to go, I never

would have imagined that it would go like this. How does a single woman with three kids at home doing online school recover from a C-section, go to school full-time, and make the Dean's Honor Roll? I can't even tell you how! It's God — that's it. He's all-powerful, and He has provided for me. So lately, I have found myself reaching out to other women online who are in the position I was in. I feel privileged to walk beside them.

I don't know what the future holds for me. I look at my smiling girl, and I can't imagine life without her. I know that she was meant to be here. God had poured out so many blessings on me because I took that leap of faith. It has inspired me to keep taking leaps of faith.

* Name changed for anonymity

"Welcome to the world, little one. I don't know how I'm going to feed you; I don't know how I'm going to keep my house, but God does, and that's all I need to know."

Crisis Pregnancy Mission

At the center of salvation history, we find a young, unmarried woman who surrendered herself to God. Our founder, Cardinal O'Connor, was deeply moved with compassion and empathy for women who found themselves unexpectedly pregnant and deeply sought to understand their experience. He said, "When your heart beats with the heart of Christ, you see the whole world differently." He saw in each pregnant woman he encountered the image of Mary carrying Christ in her womb. This is how we approach our mission of serving women who are pregnant and vulnerable.

For more information, visit:
sistersoflife.org/what-we-do/pregnancy-help/



Unmasking the lie: *How often we convince ourselves that we have to figure everything out on our own, that it's all on us, and that God will help us when we get our act together. We can think, "He's not interested in me. I've made too many mistakes. I'm so far from Him."*

THE REALITY: *God sees you, knows you, and loves you, and He waits for you to give Him permission to work in your life. He's not afraid of the mess — He chooses to enter into it. When you allow Him, He gives you the eyes to see His presence — in yourself, in your circumstances, and in those you encounter.*

What are EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE?

Sometimes called
"Medical Aid in Dying".

Euthanasia: An act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes a person's death in order to eliminate suffering (cf. CCC 2277). It often involves a physician administering a legal drug to a patient, with or without the patient's consent.

Assisted suicide: When a physician or otherwise designated individual provides the means (usually a drug) for a patient to end his/her own life.

Euthanasia and assisted suicide undermine the sacredness of the human person, because, regardless of the intention, they both involve the wrongful taking of a human life. Being made in His image and likeness, we are sacred, and our life and our death belong to God.

*True compassion
leads to sharing
another's pain;
it does not kill the
person whose
suffering we
cannot bear.*

– St. John Paul II

Diving into

THE CULTURE OF DESPAIR



The strong against the weak → *The culture of Despair says:*

Dignity means being in control.

Vulnerability and weakness are seen as liabilities. Dignity is equated to autonomy and control; if I don't have control, then I don't have dignity. In an age when I control how I am seen on social media, I want to control how I am seen at the end of my life; I don't want to be remembered as weak, or dependent, or in need. It's about my choice, my decision. Being in control is the most important thing in life.

Suffering and death are meaningless.

Suffering robs me of pleasure and autonomy. If I can't enjoy my life, then my life has no meaning. And death is just the end — there's nothing more beyond. Nothing really matters, ultimately. Being able to choose when and how I die gives me a sense that I can control death.

I only matter if I'm productive.

If I measure myself by what I can do, produce, or achieve, then being weak and vulnerable is terrifying, because suddenly I feel worthless. I feel like a burden.

"It frightens me to contemplate a society that has determined it is more economical to assist in suicide than to care for me, to listen to me talk about my pain and troubles, to administer a healing touch to my disfigured, disabled body."

– Lisa K. Gigliotti, Esq.



vulnerability

THE CULTURE OF HOPE



The strong helping to carry the weak → The culture of Hope says:

Dignity is intrinsic.

Dignity is not synonymous with control — that would mean that children and those with disabilities do not have dignity, because they are dependent on others. I have dignity because I am made in the image and likeness of God, and nothing can take that dignity away. I am not to be discarded because I am weak or vulnerable, but celebrated and revered because I am me. Love is the most important thing in life.

Suffering and death have meaning.

Jesus redeemed us through His suffering and death on the cross, and by His Resurrection He turned suffering and death into a source of grace for the world. I can actually unite my sufferings with His on the cross, and win graces for others. Suffering and death don't have to be a painful absurdity if I choose to allow Christ to enter into and transform my suffering — they can become a powerful encounter with God Himself, and actually unite me more closely to others.

I am a gift, not a burden.

The human person is never to be used to achieve an end, but is an end in himself/herself. I am worthy of tremendous reverence and care. I am a gift, and I can rest in the truth that God is in charge and He delights in me. I am loved by Him, and I don't have to be afraid of being weak. He is with me.

"When we met, I was afraid of being a burden and not mattering. Now I feel different. ... I guess I remembered the 'why' to live."

- Words from a patient of Dr. E. Wes Ely

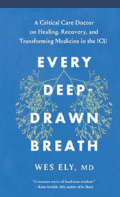
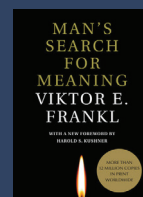
What is PALLIATIVE CARE?

"Palliative care is about accompaniment. The goal is to help the patient live the best life possible despite having a serious illness. Palliative care works to help decrease suffering the patient has – be it physical, emotional, mental, spiritual ... This is entirely different from the practices of physician assisted suicide or euthanasia which, rather than working to eliminate the suffering, actually eliminates the sufferer."

- Dr. Natalie Rodden,
Palliative Medicine Physician

Here's a few helpful resources:

- **Sisters of Life / End of Life**
sistersoflife.org/end-of-life/
Includes: Inspirational testimonies, resources for end-of-life decision-making, and three minute videos on vulnerability, compassionate presence, treating the whole person, and the meaning of suffering.
- **Man's Search for Meaning**
- Viktor Frankl
- **Chiara Corbella Petrillo: A Witness to Joy**
- Simone Troisi & Cristiana Paccini
- **Every Deep-Drawn Breath**
- Dr. E. Wes Ely



You are sacred. You are worthy of love and care to the end.

"We are sent to heal even when cure is not possible. What we should be trying to heal is often not physical disease or clinical depression, but a person's sense of insignificance and hopelessness, which we cannot heal by eliminating the person."

- from the article "What happens when a patient says, 'Doc, help me die'" by Dr. E. Wes Ely



MY HUSBAND, KENNY



AN INTERVIEW WITH **LYNDA HOLLER**

by Sr. Charity, SV and Sr. Zélie Maria Louis, SV

"Hi, my name is Kenny. How do you like me so far?" This was how Kenny introduced himself to Lynda in a crowded bar in Queens one night. It didn't take Lynda long to realize she liked him a lot. Kenny was a NYC firefighter and the life of the party. Two years later they were married. In their first year of marriage, Kenny was diagnosed with oral cancer. Thus began their journey of discovering the true value of love, life, and suffering.

Can you tell us about Kenny?

Everyone wanted to be with Kenny. He had a quick wit, and people just liked being around him. He made them feel good, valued, important. They recognized he was really listening. He always wanted to serve – that's why being a firefighter was so important to him. He was also a really competitive athlete. He used to tell the kids when they were playing basketball, "You have to think that that's your ball, and you have to get that ball back." I realized that was his attitude with the cancer, too.

How did Kenny's illness affect your marriage?

Eight months after we got married, he was diagnosed with throat cancer. I can still picture the scene: him coming back from the doctor, walking into our house and saying, "I have cancer." If I knew then what I know now, I could never have borne the years ahead. [But] I would also never have as intensely pondered, learned, and absorbed the richness of love, faith, sacrifice, and suffering. Our life together did not unfold the way I imagined, but I believe it unfolded the way it was meant to.

Things definitely had to alter, of course. We had to have new normals. We just did that. We did it as "Team Holler." What he couldn't do, I did, and what I couldn't do, he did. We grew closer to each other. I really came to comprehend that Kenny and I were one. I had a realization of that when I was looking at him dozing in his chair one day. I felt this oneness in a way that was supernatural. When you get married you hear the words, "You are no longer two; you are one," but it's hard to understand that. That day, I realized that when he hurt, I hurt. This was a huge discovery for me of what the Sacrament of Matrimony means.

How did Kenny face his suffering?

The suffering that Kenny endured was unlike anything I had ever seen or could have ever imagined. What others might take for granted – going out for dinner, having a glass of wine – we couldn't do that. It was hard to travel. Then as he got sicker, he had a trach, and people couldn't understand him. But we just kept adapting. He was on a liquid diet for so long. He would go hours without eating, too, and not complain. He'd have to rinse out his mouth a lot, take his time when he ate to make sure he didn't choke. Therefore, he learned to accept being hungry. I realized after he died that he really fasted a lot. But he didn't complain. He was thankful to be alive, to see our two boys grow up, to be present with us. He lost his ability to speak gradually, but he still made people feel good to be around

him. Then he lost his ability to talk completely, so he would use a white board to write, still trying to do the one-liners for people. Even in the hospital, he would make the doctors and nurses feel good.

How were you able to find hope and meaning in the midst of suffering?

I would speak with my priests and friends about God's purpose for suffering, and they would mention redemptive suffering. I could kind of understand how Jesus' suffering could help us, but how could Kenny's suffering make the world any better? This was still a tough concept for me to comprehend.

Until one day, I was sitting by Kenny's hospital bed. He had been sleeping most of the day. I woke him to tell him I was leaving, and he held up his index finger, signaling, "Wait." He pulled out a sheet of paper, and he started to write because he couldn't speak anymore. He was writing me a letter about what I meant to him. But he kept dozing off. I would gently shake him and say, "Kenny, finish my letter." I waited two hours for that letter. Finally, he finished, and I walked out of the hospital with those precious notes in my bag, feeling that my heart had been hit with a hand grenade. I stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, and I bowed my head and prayed, "God please use this

suffering for something enormous. Save a lot of souls, bring people to You. But don't let this be for nothing."

And God spoke to me as clearly in my heart as if He had whispered it in my ear. He told me that we were suffering for people who do not suffer well: people that turned away from Him in their suffering instead of towards Him. We were helping real individual people. We may not know them, or we might. It could be Felipe in the Philippines, Doris in Denver, or someone in our own family or community. That is God's discretion, but our suffering is valuable. It is accomplishing something, and it is very, very important. God took that complicated message of redemptive suffering, and He made it real for me.

How did you see God at work in your lives?

When Kenny got sick, I prayed. But as time went on, I felt like there was this big silence – where's God? I wanted a relationship with God. I felt like He was not responding. But I also always felt that everything was





St. Faustina wrote in her diary:

"During Holy Mass, I saw the Lord Jesus nailed upon the cross amidst great torments. A soft moan issued from His heart. After some time, He said, 'I thirst, I thirst for the salvation of souls. Help me, My daughter, to save souls. Join your sufferings to My Passion and offer them to the Heavenly Father for sinners.'" (No. 1032)



Unmasking the lie:

The father of lies (the devil) plants doubts when we are suffering, to make us feel depressed, overwhelmed, and hopeless. He prompts us with thoughts such as: "This will never end. God has abandoned me. He doesn't care. He wants to punish me. I am alone. This suffering is useless."

THE REALITY:

Jesus is with you in your suffering. No matter what you've done or where you've been, He loves you deeply. He knows that your suffering can have tremendous meaning and grace if we unite it to His on the cross. He whispers, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer 29:11).

going to be okay, this interior feeling. I know the Holy Spirit worked through our friends, the neighbors, the doctors to help me. I'm so thankful I recognized that in real time. A lot of this I recognized afterwards, to know that God was with us.

And it was clear to me that Kenny was making a big impact on people. I could see it in the faces of strangers. People were praying for him who don't normally pray. One day, I flipped to the back of Kenny's notebook and saw he had written, "My name is Kenny, I can't talk." He wasn't doing that in a sad way, but so he could show the receptionist. But it hit me very hard. This fun-loving, life-of-the-party guy was now "My name is Kenny, I can't talk." It made me sad. But that night, I woke up thinking, "That sounds like the title of a book." I said, "Okay, God ... what's the plan?"

I ended up interviewing over 200 people, everyone from Kenny's childhood friends, to his nurses, to my two sons. There's even a reflection from a septic tank driver who only met Kenny once but was deeply impacted. Every one of the interviews surprised me. When I would sit down to interview someone, I would have a preconceived idea of what they would tell me. It was never what I thought it would be.

I realized we don't know what impact we're making on people. I think it's so important for people to realize that our life has value all the way to the very end, in both the joy and the suffering.

How did your journey with Kenny impact the way you view assisted suicide?

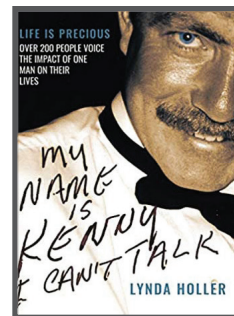
The year that Kenny was dying was the same year that Brittany Maynard was public with her plans to end her life through assisted suicide. I felt sorry for her. We were at the worst point of our lives, but we knew we were doing the right thing. I felt sorry for her [because] she thought her life wouldn't have value if she wasn't healthy and strong and young.

I knew that after Kenny died I would have to get involved in some way and tell our story. I really believe that how we die is the culmination of our whole life. We're impacting people; people are watching how we face the end of life. If suicide is thought of as just another medical treatment option, then people are going to start to follow that. There's already so much despair. To increase despair by making suicide accepted is so dangerous.

How can we fight against despair and truly accompany people at the end of life?

Life is challenging. Even if we're not going through a challenge right now, there's going to be one ahead – three months, six months from now. But we tend to be a society that says, "I can do that myself; I don't need help." We think that's admirable, but it actually isn't. By accepting help, letting others help us, we can be giving them a gift. Kenny taught us how to accept help.

I didn't know what to do when Kenny got sick. We had a palliative care nurse that came into our home, and she was my lifesaver. There's something called "total pain control" that palliative doctors take into account. Physical pain is just one component. There's also emotional pain, the pain of being abandoned, of having lost a job. A palliative care doctor is not just looking at the physical pain – that's usually controllable with pain meds – but they look for other areas of support that are needed. I would love for people to advocate for their loved ones to have real palliative care services. If people don't look at their lives in a richer way, they're not going to see the value of people's lives at the end. Kenny was just as important to us the day that he died, as the moment I married him.



My Name is Kenny. I Can't Talk.

- by Lynda Holler



YOU ARE GOOD

because God created you.
He loves you without strings attached.

Looking at others the way God looks at me.

God does not look upon me with contempt, and He doesn't want me to either. He invites me to true, authentic self-love, knowing that I am good. When I live confident in this truth, then I can make the person in front of me more important than any task to get done, because I can see the other not as a burden or a threat, but as a gift.

In a world saturated with criticism and competition, our hearts yearn for acceptance and affirmation. We seek to be loved not just in our doing or having, but in our *being*. Yet, because we so often believe ourselves to be the measure of our failures, we can approach ourselves with self-contempt.

True self-love

But God does not look upon us with contempt, and He doesn't want us to either. On the contrary — He invites us into the heights and depths of love! A great Doctor of the Church, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, names four levels of love:

1st level: loving myself for my own sake

2nd level: loving God for my own sake

3rd level: loving God for God's sake

4th level: loving myself for God's sake

The highest degree of love we can attain is actually self-love for God's sake!

Wait ... what?! We can look at it this way: When we really love someone, we love what they love. Christ loved us so much He died on the cross for us — each of us. So, because He loves me so much, I will love myself. Now, this doesn't mean egoism, indulgence, or self-flattery. It means being held by the truth that God made me — no matter my failures — as a good gift, worth loving forever. And it's only when we truly love ourselves that we are able to truly love others.

Loving others as God loves them

This love overflows into Jesus' call for us to love others as He loves them. What does this mean, practically? It means making the person in front of us more important than the clock or any tasks to get done. It is letting our bodies communicate that we are with and for the other — warmth in our eyes, a kind smile, receptive posture. It means taking a sincere interest in the other, ultimately listening not because we are good, but because he or she is good. Before us is not a problem to be solved or an argument to be won, but a beloved child of God. As we allow ourselves to be moved by the goodness of the person before us, we can then reflect back to him that reality, so that he, too, experiences himself as good. As Psychologist Conrad Baars says, "I affirm another when I recognize that the other is good, worthwhile, and lovable — precisely the way he or she is — period."

Now, affirming another in their identity doesn't necessarily mean affirming their behavior. God never affirms sin or disorder, but He seeks to heal, restore, and raise up. While others threw stones at the woman caught in adultery, Jesus stooped to her level, looked her in the eye, and summoned her to a life of greater freedom: "I do not condemn you. Your past mistakes do not define you. You are made for infinite love. Now go and sin no more" (cf. *Jn 8:1-11*). Love means helping others flourish as God desires.

Jesus calls us to live in the awesome truth that we are good, made to love and be loved. Let's live it.

YOU ARE MADE TO LOVE

Christ died on the cross to save each of us from sin and death – the supreme act of love, the ultimate gift of self. This is what love looks like. We, who are made in His image and likeness, are called to this same love, and actually find ourselves through this love. Every act of love is a participation in Jesus' act of love on the cross.

We become most truly ourselves when we allow ourselves to be conformed to the life of Christ — from His birth, to His suffering and death, to His Resurrection. In His life, all of our ordinariness, trials, and joys are illumined. In His Passion, all of our sufferings and pains take on redemptive meaning. And in His Resurrection, all of our wounds are healed, and our hearts are restored. It is in Him that the truth of who we are and how we are called to love is made clear.

A PRAYER FOR LOVE

Jesus, You are love, and Your love is unending.

You loved me first, and I believe in Your love for me. You say that I am made in Your image, and that You want my life to unleash Your love into the world.

Jesus, I give You everything. Jesus, illuminate all my joys and sorrows. Jesus, redeem all my sufferings. Jesus, heal my wounds. My heart is restored in You.

Jesus, I give You permission: flood me with Your love today, that You may love through me. Help me to be with You. Amen.



Christ identified Himself with the weak and sinful of all ages – with each of us – that we might not be afraid to come to Him in our time of need and find strength to carry our crosses with Him, to be intimately united with Him in love.



“Light’s glory is
to dispel darkness.
Christ has illumined
you with wisdom and
the fire of His presence.
It has been sparked
and kindled in you.
Let it blaze.”

- Caryll Houselander



MEDITATION: SIMON & JESUS

“...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me” (Mt 25:40).

“This is not my business! He’s the criminal, not me! This is unjust!” I shouted in disgust. My words were swallowed up by the cacophony around me. Something, however, compelled me to look at Him again. When I did, I could not move. His bloodied, swollen eyes met mine with a love that cannot be expressed in words. There was a longing, a pleading there. As He quietly moaned, it was as if His heart spoke to mine, and somehow I knew what His voice could not utter. “Console Me, Simon,” He seemed to be pleading. “Help Me to carry My cross. I am alone.” Instantly, my heart bled for Him. It was a gentle invitation, and I spontaneously reached out my hand to this unknown man. With that one small act of kindness, I felt a surge go through my body. Something left me — a strange heaviness that had been with me for too many years. My world expanded, and I could see and feel beyond myself. I had love and compassion for this man, and for every soul that suffers. My life had meaning. My wife and children mattered. Every person mattered. Strangely, I felt cherished and chosen in what minutes before seemed only a cruel injustice done to me. A new energy filled my being, and my only desire was to bring relief to this poor, humble soul without a name. I quickly intertwined my arms through His and pulled the beam up for the two of us. And together we dragged the wood forward.

*-An excerpt from the book Epiphanies,
by the Sisters of Life*

When you unite yourself to Jesus in your
suffering or help others carry their crosses,

YOU ARE ANOTHER SIMON.



PERPETUAL PROFESSION OF RELIGIOUS VOWS 2021

Sr. Elizabeth Grace of the Trinity, SV

Each of us is a “house of God,” where the Holy Trinity abides through grace. No longer is my life one of endlessly seeking to earn, prove, or deserve the love of God. I exist to “be” with Him. The Merciful Love of God has opened up in my heart a limitless capacity for freedom and joy.

Sr. Jordan Rose of the Beloved Son, SV

We are never alone. God is with us and never abandons us. He actually desires to be with us. When we recognize this “with-ness,” it changes everything! We can walk through the valleys of shadow, echoing the words of Psalm 23, “I shall not fear, for You are with me.”

Sr. Pia Jude of the Immaculate Conception, SV

Life is an adventure. Love is our greatest desire. The human person has the capacity to be a living Rosary – at all times participating in Christ’s self-offering. Baptism makes all of that possible, making heaven a promised gift for eternity.

Sr. Magnificat Rose of the Joy of Jesus and the Little Way, SV

A woman we serve was recently asked, “What have the Sisters of Life taught you?” Her reply captured our charism for me: “That I matter. That I am special and important.” We are infinitely loved and have been created to love without limits. And God can bring good out of anything.

Sr. Cara Marie of Nazareth, SV

I bring joy to the heart of God! I remember my dad always finding ways to make me laugh and smile. How much more does my Father in heaven want me to be “wondrously happy”! He made me, He loves me, and nothing can change that.

Sr. Maria Cristina de la Cruz, SV

Each person is totally unique and precious, and each person suffers differently. Suffering is part of the human experience, and to struggle well is possible with God’s grace and being accompanied. All sufferings will bring fruit in God’s time. “Patience obtains all things,” as St. Teresa of Avila would say.

Photo by Jeffrey Bruno



I, Sr. Maria Cristina de la Cruz, do vow to Almighty God, poverty, chastity, obedience, and to protect and enhance the sacredness of human life and to persevere faithfully until death ...

(A portion of the vows formula publicly professed at the Perpetual Profession of Vows of the Sisters of Life)



*Each Sister wants you to know:
You are unique and unrepeatable.*



**A favorite prayer
of Fr. Koterski**

*Heart of Christ
which beat long months
in the Virgin's womb,
Lord, have mercy.*

*Heart of Christ
which poured forth
Blood and Water
when pierced by a lance,
Christ have mercy.*

*Heart of Christ
which beats for us still in eternity,
Lord, have mercy.*

by Sr. Marie Veritas, SV and Sr. Maris Stella, SV

"Our" Father Koterski

This is how so many thought of him — as their own.

It was an ordinary sight to see him lumbering down our hallways with his warm smile, the white chalk from his most recent class lecture dusting his rumpled black clerics. He was at home everywhere. He was at home teaching our postulants and novices, helping with dishes at our retreat center, and offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass daily in one of our chapels. He was at home in the halls of academia, in the freshman flurry of Fordham's Queen's Court, and in the parish life of Holy Trinity Church, where he assisted on weekends. He was at home giving retreats for the Missionaries of Charity in Haiti, teaching seminarians in Dunwoodie Seminary, and sharing life with his Jesuit brothers, young and old. He was at home everywhere, and he belonged to everyone, truly becoming "all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22).

Born on November 28, 1953, the long-desired son of his parents who had prayed to St. Joseph every day for 14 years for the gift of a child, he was named Joseph W. Koterski. Marked with a cleft palate from birth, he had a particular heart for the unborn because he felt so keenly his own vulnerability — aware that the world might have responded to his imperfection with abortion. His humility from the time of his childhood and his love for beauty and truth led him into a prestigious academic career in philosophy before entering the Society of Jesus in 1984.

After his ordination in 1992, Fr. Koterski began celebrating Mass at our convents. He would often come early and sit himself down in a creaky pew, his deep, kindly voice joining ours in the chanting of the psalms as he prepared to celebrate the liturgy. He was a spiritual director for countless Sisters, heard untold numbers of confessions, taught spiritual theology, philosophy, metaphysics, and logic to our postulants and novices, led Sisters on eight-day Ignatian retreats, spent every Thanksgiving with us for the past 10 years, and offered the sacraments and spiritual counsel to many of the women we serve.

He was a man of untiring love. The confessional was his regular abode, where he would sit for hours, reading a book between penitents, a cup of coffee beside him and his black shoes peeking out from behind the confessional screen. He answered thousands of questions over the years of teaching our postulants and novices, and he would respond to each one with deep respect, gracious care, and thoughtful precision. It was one of his greatest delights to lead us (and others) in lively readings of Shakespeare, Dante, and Dorothy Sayers, drawing out from Sisters a captivating combination of untapped acting skills, deep reflection, and riotous laughter. He had an uncanny way of fostering peace and joy wherever he went; yet, he never took center stage, but allowed others to flourish in gifts they didn't even know they had.

With five degrees, including a Ph.D. in Philosophy, the author of hundreds of articles, the editor of multiple journals and books, holding 13 academic positions over his priestly life, hosting a radio show, and being involved in over 35 organizations and boards, his daily calendar was astonishing, and yet he never seemed in a rush. When he was with you, he was completely available, as if he had nothing to do in the world except talk to you. He took genuine interest in each person God put in his way, and every Sister would attest that she had a personal relationship with him. He had an edifying, encouraging presence, and he made you feel like you were the most important person in the world to him.

Fr. Koterski was a man with an enormous intellect — a brilliant philosopher and theologian who also had a vast knowledge and love of literature, science, mathematics, and history — and yet he lived with the freedom and simplicity of a child of God. He spent his life examining serious issues, but he was quick to laugh, delighted in the little joys of life, sought to cheer the disheartened, and always hastened to give of himself. He intuitively knew where and what the need was and had an eye for the suffering, the poor, and the rejected. His unwavering devotion to the truth of Jesus Christ and the memory of his own personal medical history, coupled with a

large, tender heart and a particular knack for listening, fueled his passionate defense of human life. He deeply understood the truth of the dignity of every human person, made in God's image and likeness, and he sought to radiate that truth to all he encountered.

He was a man who believed Jesus with his whole heart and who did everything he could to know Jesus better and to

become like Him. Rooted in deep prayer, he loved the Eucharist and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, making it the source and center of his existence. In the image of the Father, he generously and gently bestowed mercy upon sinners who would flock to him for confession and spiritual direction, and counseled many couples in the ups and downs of marriage and family life. His heroic patience, constant posture of gratitude, and forgetfulness of self marked his expansive spiritual fatherhood. A true son of St. Ignatius, the Church, and Blessed Mother Mary, it pained him to see sorrow in the Church, yet he stood confident in the power of the Resurrection, addressing every situation with astounding clarity of thought and incredible charity.

It was in this confidence, clarity, and love that the Lord took him home. On August 9, 2021, the feast of the great philosopher and martyr St. Edith Stein,

as Fr. Koterski was walking down the hall to collect his breviary for evening prayer, he suffered a heart attack and died.

The man who was at home everywhere went home to God. And we — along with every soul he touched — wept, in sorrow and in gratitude.

Fr. Koterski was a faithful and devoted priest to the last. He was a whole, integrated person, a man who had fallen in love with God and who had let his whole life be shaped by that love. He — whom doctors weren't sure would ever be able to speak because of his cleft palate — was one of the most eloquent and prodigious preachers on the dignity of human life. He was our chaplain, our teacher, our confessor, our father, our friend. He was our Fr. Koterski.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.



Fr. Koterski was a faithful and devoted priest to the last. He was a whole, integrated person, a man who had fallen in love with God and who had let his whole life be shaped by that love.

FIRST PROFESSION OF VOWS

June 26th, 2021

L-R: Sr. Eden Marie, SV; Sr. Rose Patrick O'Connor, SV;
Sr. Maria Annunciata, SV; Sr. Elena Marie, SV; Sr. Noelle Marie Bethlehem, SV



After professing first vows, Sisters of Life receive a medal with an engraved image of the “Madonna of the Streets” by Roberto Ferruzzi.



What's in a painting?

“You’ve seen the painting ... called the ‘Madonna of the Streets’ by the Italian artist Roberto Ferruzzi. It is said that Ferruzzi painted a diptych — a painting that has two sides. [One side] depicts a woman of the streets, a prostitute, ... frantically rushing around the streets of this little Italian town with a baby ... not knowing what to do. She turned a corner and met the Virgin Mother carrying her baby, Jesus. Mary reached out and took the baby of the prostitute and in return gave her the Baby Jesus. Those who look at the painting see [that] the Baby ... is obviously the infant Jesus, and they immediately assume that the woman of the streets is the Mother of God. The point of this story is that by the very fact that the woman is now holding the Christ Child she is transformed so that she sees herself as the Madonna, hence the title ‘Madonna of the Streets’. This is what Christ does to us, the Eucharistic Christ, the Christ that we carry beneath our hearts, the Christ that we receive from Mary. This is the one [the depiction of Mary] that marks the Sisters of Life.”

-John Cardinal O'Connor

MARY, OUR MOTHER

“The most lovely depictions of Mary, I believe, are those which show her as Mother of the Redeemer in the true sense: the mother of the One who came in a ministry of reconciliation; the mother of the God who can’t stand seeing anything lost, who gives a spider the ability to reweave a torn web; the mother of the One who came to pick up the pieces lest they be lost. The mother of that Christ depicted as Mother of the Redeemer — these, I think, are the most hauntingly appealing presentations of Mary.” -John Cardinal O'Connor

You are chosen by God.



Prayer
is the source of
OUR MISSIONS:
*Pregnancy Help
Hope and Healing After Abortion
New York Respect Life Office
College Student Outreach
Evangelization
Retreats*



WE HAVE TWO NEW FOUNDATIONS! Phoenix, AZ and Catskill, NY



Hope & Healing After Abortion

"My sin caused me to go inward, placing a shield around my heart. I felt unworthy of love, especially from Our Lord. But He makes all things new. His love and mercy penetrated my heart so deeply. My heart is no longer imprisoned by pain and self-hatred, but is now wide open to receive and give love."

- Mary Elizabeth*

You are not alone.

"Fear not, for I am with you" (Is 41:10).

There is no sin or darkness greater than the love and mercy of Jesus Christ. No matter where we are in life, no matter what we have suffered, no matter what sins we have committed or mistakes we have made, God is hastening after us with His mercy. We are not the sum of our failures. As our founder, Cardinal O'Connor said, "If there be anyone suffering ... from past or present problems, past or present sins, if we fear that we are not pure and holy before Almighty God, if our sense of unworthiness so overcomes us that it separates us from Christ, [know] that Mary is beckoning us toward Christ by way of the confessional, telling us where we can find the lost Christ. Mary found Him in the temple. We find Him in the confessional where in an instant those words of the Scriptures come true: *"though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool"* (Is 1:18).

We have the incredible privilege of walking the road of healing with women suffering after abortion, through accompaniment and retreats. God has a unique and exquisite plan of healing for each woman, one that liberates and restores. Be not afraid! Jesus is waiting for you with His love.

For more information on:

Hope & Healing After Abortion

sistersoflife.org/healing-after-abortion

* Name changed for anonymity.

**"We are not
the sum of our
weaknesses and failures;
we are the sum of the
Father's love for us and
our real capacity to
become the image
of His Son Jesus."**

- St. John Paul II

You are important to God.

That's why there is a battle being waged over your heart.

You are important to God. That's why the evil one seeks to destroy and divide our hearts, minds, families, and even our persons. The Spirit of God, however, seeks to unify and give life. We are ultimately at the center of a spiritual battle, bigger than laws and cultural norms — bigger even than abortion. And because it is a spiritual battle, it requires a spiritual response.

Our founder, John Cardinal

O'Connor, was very involved in pro-life work and was a strong voice for life as the Archbishop of New York. As the years went on, he recognized that while there was lots of good work being done in the pro-life movement, something was still missing. He took all of this to prayer, and he began praying with Mark, Chapter 9, where Jesus comes down the mountain to find that the disciples cannot cast one particular demon out.

So Jesus casts it out, and the disciples ask Him, "Lord, why is it that we were not able to cast this demon out?" And the Lord says, "This kind of demon can only be cast out by prayer and fasting" (*cf. Mk 9:29*). Cardinal O'Connor recognized that "contempt for human life is a demon that can only be cast out by prayer and fasting." This is a battle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers (*cf. Eph 6:12*).

The power of prayer and fasting:

Prayer and fasting are incredibly powerful — they realign our hearts to God, defend us against evil, and win graces for others. Choosing to open ourselves to Jesus' love each day through prayer and the sacraments opens up a torrent of God's life-giving grace upon the world and helps root us in the truth that we belong to Him.



YOU ARE MY BELOVED, AND I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS.

PRAYER: Intimate conversation with God roots us in the reality of a love that conquers death.

● **Eucharistic Adoration**

"The best, the surest, and the most effective way of establishing peace on the face of the earth is through the great power of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament." - *St. John Paul II*

"Jesus could not be here more truly than He is here [in the Eucharist]. He could not be here more truly than if He appeared in the flesh ... You would not see Him more truly if you were at Bethlehem where He was born, if you were among the shepherds, if you were among the angels, if you were among the wise men. You would not see Him more clearly if you watched Him work miracles on the hills of Galilee. You would not hear His voice more plainly, more powerfully, if you were present for the sermon on the Mount. He is here, absolutely, as realistically, as He was on the cross, as He was in the Garden of the Resurrection, as He appeared again to the apostles. This is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

- *John Cardinal O'Connor*



● **Holy Sacrifice of the Mass**

"At every Mass a miracle occurs, nothing less. Boundaries of time and space mysteriously disappear. What Jesus did on the cross at Calvary becomes present in the here and now of every celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, we not only draw near to the heart of Jesus beating in His chest at the Last Supper, we also draw near to His pierced heart on Calvary." - *Fr. James Kubicki, SJ*

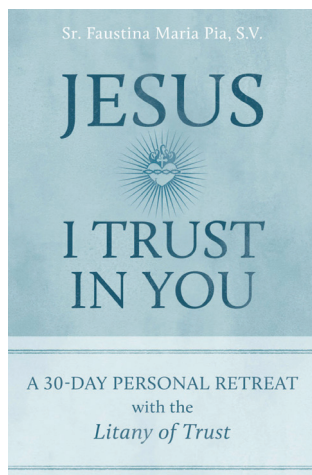
FASTING:

Forgoing a legitimate good/pleasure for the sake of love is an act of giving God primacy. It's saying, "God, You are the most important. You are in charge." Choosing to deny ourselves even small things (like a cup of coffee, social media time, or a second helping), in union with Christ, can actually change the course of history.



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