



4609 Martin Street South, Cropwell, AL 35054
Office: 205-525-5161 Fax: 205-525-5162
www.ollpellcity.com parish@ollpellcity.com

Rev. William P. Lucas, Pastor

Deacon Terrence Rumore

Deacon Serge Brazzolotto

Deacon E. Lee Robinson

Director of Religious Education
Music Director
Parish Secretary

Kelly Cardenas
Charmaine Welch
Shelly Hamman

MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday : 5:00 p.m. Sunday: 8:30 a.m. & 11:15 a.m.
Weekdays: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 9:00 a.m.
Wednesday: 7:00 p.m.

OFFICE HOURS: Monday—Thursday 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

CONFESSIONS:

Saturday 4:00 p.m. - 4:50 p.m. or
by appointment.

MARRIAGES:

Must be scheduled with the Priest
at least 6 months in advance.

MORNING ROSARY:

8:30 a.m. before Mass.

MONDAYS:

Miraculous Medal Novena following Mass.

EVERY FIRST FRIDAY:

Novena To The Sacred Heart
of Jesus - before 9 a.m. Mass.
Eucharistic Adoration 9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

HOLY HOUR OF ADORATION:

Third Sunday of every month at 7:00 p.m.
Second Wednesday of every month— 7:30 p.m.
Exposición del Santísimo el segundo Miércoles
de cada mes @ 7:30 p.m.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

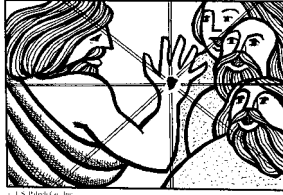
August through May. Ages 3 yrs. through
High School.

Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church

Saturday, April 10, 2021
Mass 8:00 pm

Sunday, April 11, 2021
Masses 8:30 am & 11:15 am

Sunday of Divine Mercy
April 11, 2021



*Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one
who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
—1 John 5:5*



April 12 - April 18

Monday: Susan Dunnevant by Fr. William Lucas †
Tuesday: Michael Smith by Walton Smith
Wednesday: Hazel Waldon by the Zielinskis †
Thursday: Betty & Yolie by the Brazzolottos †
Friday: Debra Robinson by Lee & Cheryl Robinson †
Saturday: Trudi & Andy McClay by the Zielinskis †
Sunday: Deacon Bob & Susan Martin by the
Brazzolottos

For the People

Please pray for the ill and shut-ins:

Paul Boyle, Jacky Johnson, Peggy Gessler, Gail Layton, Diana Markevich, Dorothy DiMattia, Walton Smith, Juanita Crowson, Kelly Dale, Toni James, Bob Walsh, Sarah Svetlay, Charles & Libby Lafleur, Fred Brown, Jan Bowman, Silvia Moten, Wayne Adams, Herb Kuntz, Bill Frost, Audrey Springer, Patsy de Victoria, Christine Jaks, Jeanie Reid, Ruth Stanley, Nancy Ross, Jackie Thoma, Cathy Funderburg Parker, Fr. Gray Bean, Dan Moynihan, Madelyn Guald, Pat Sobolowski

Please pray for all our loved ones who are ill and our shut-ins. To add a name, call the church office; or to add to the Prayer Hot Line please email Sharon Stice at sharonstice46@gmail.com or call 205-613-1053.

Weekly Readings ~ April 12—April 18

Monday: Acts 4:23-31; Ps 2:1-3, 4-9; Jn 3:1-8
Tuesday: Acts 4:32-37, Ps 93:1-2, 5; Jn 3:7b-15
Wednesday: Acts 5:17-26; Ps 34:2-9; Jn 3:16-21
Thursday: Acts 5:27-33; Ps 34:2, 9, 17-20; Jn 3:31-36
Friday: Acts 5:34-42; Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14; Jn 6:1-15
Saturday: Acts 6:1-7; Ps 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19; Jn 6:16-21
Sunday: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; Ps 4:2, 4, 7-9; 1 Jn 2:1-5a; Lk 24:35-48

Today's Readings



First Reading — With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Acts 4:32-35).

Psalm — Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting (Psalm 118).

Second Reading — The victory that conquers the world is our faith (1 John 5:1-6).

Gospel — Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed (John 20:19-31).

THE EASTER SEASON

Though our culture celebrates Easter as a day, in the Catholic Church Easter is a season. The Easter Season lasts 50 days. In the liturgy, things don't go back to "normal" until the day after Pentecost Sunday (May 24th this year).

The catechumens, those baptized at Easter, are now called neophytes. They are the "new" Catholics. For them, the 50 days of the Easter season is called the period of Mystagogy. It is a time to reflect on the meaning of the sacraments they received at the Easter vigil: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

To call something a "mystery" in a religious sense, means that the reality of the thing is greater than its appearance. For example, in Baptism what appears to be the pouring of water over the forehead of an individual is really the transmitting of the sanctifying grace necessary for salvation and a "rebirth" to eternal life. Whether or not the person makes it to eternal life will depend on how they use that sanctifying grace to bear spiritual fruit in this life.

The Easter season may also be used by the whole Church as a time to reflect on the meaning of the sacraments. What is the reality of the sacraments that we have received and continue to receive, like the Eucharist and Penance? Does the grace of these sacraments make a difference in our lives? If not, perhaps the problem is that we do not understand the mysteries we are observing. We are failing to see the realities behind the appearances.

We needed the 40 days of Lent, with its prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, to make the changes necessary for a worthy celebration of Easter. Now we have these 50 days to seek a deeper understanding of the grace God gives us in the sacraments of the Church.

Permanent Diaconate Program Seeks Interested Men

The Permanent Diaconate has been present in the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama since 1973. With the arrival of Bishop Raica in 2020, and at his direction, the Office of the Permanent Diaconate is looking to identify men who are interested in the Permanent Diaconate for the next formation class. Although the date for the start of the new class has not been set by Bishop Raica, the Office of the Permanent Diaconate will begin to develop a list of men who are interested in obtaining more information about the formation process. It is hoped that once the current restrictions have been relaxed, and after additional review by Bishop Raica, there will be more informational sessions and an opportunity for men, and their wives, to learn more about the Permanent Diaconate and the formation process in the future. Men who are interested in the Permanent Diaconate can contact Deacon Rosko via email at crosko@bhmdiocese.org.

Offertory Collection

July 2020 — June 2021

| | Actual | Needed |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|
| April 4 Offertory | \$6,392 | \$5,558 |
| Year to Date | \$249,867 | \$222,320 |

Building Fund Collection

July 2020 — June 2021

| | Actual | Needed |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|
| April 4 Building Fund | \$871 | \$678 |
| Year to Date | \$34,592 | \$27,120 |



Chair: Jennifer Rosato:

jrosato1972@gmail.com

Vice Chair: Bernie Funderburg

boxacarbern1@aol.com

Secretary: Gloria Raynor:

grodgers2010@gmail.com

Matthew Allor: mjallor.1969@gmail.com

Sonia Dale: wmksdale2000@gmail.com

Britton Falkner: brittonfalkner@gmail.com

Debbie Gossett: debbiegossett@msn.com

Bart Perry: brpgep07@yahoo.com

Allen Ross: allentross5555@gmail.com

Council meetings are open to all parishioners, and are typically on the third Wed. of the month after Mass.



Divine Mercy Sunday Celebration!

Sunday, April 11th

Adoration & Confessions

2:00 pm—3:00 pm

Divine Mercy Chaplet
3:00 pm

BELL TOWER FUND DRIVE

The parish has received architectural renderings for a tower to house a bell. The bell has been purchased and fitted for automatic ringing. The total cost of the project is approximately \$100,000. **We have pledges of \$30,000 and collected an additional \$2,280 as of April 5, 2021.** The rest of the cost will need to be raised **before** a contract can be signed by Bishop Raica and construction can begin.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation, make the check out to Our Lady of the Lake and write "Bell Tower" on the check. You may also donate online though Faithdirect. Indicate in the donor notes that your contribution is for the Bell Tower. See the OLL website for more information on how to sign up for online giving at ollpellcity.com/collection-basket

Computer-generated renderings of the bell tower can be found in either foyer of the church.

PASTORAL COUNCIL ELECTION

The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body. The Pastor consults the members to get feedback on pastoral initiatives and to find out the needs of the parish.

The Council is made up of nine members serving staggered three-year terms. The year begins in July and ends the following June. Elections for new members are held in May.



If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else as a candidate, contact the parish office. **If you nominate someone else, be sure to get their permission before nominating them.**



First Annual Ann's New Life Medical Pregnancy Center Benefit Bass Fishing Tournament on Logan Martin Lake

(Date to be Announced)

Sponsorship Levels

Gold Level Sponsor \$1000

2 Social Media posts per week to local Facebook pages.

1 highlighting post on all local fishing Facebook Groups.

Logo included on all materials associated with tournament (social media, printed material and banner).

3-5 mentions during Facebook Live video of tournament and tagged in pictures during the tournament.

Tent area during tournament registration and weigh in (tent not provided).

Silver Level Sponsor \$500

1 Social Media post per week to local Facebook pages.

2-3 mentions during Facebook Live videos during tournament.

Tent area during tournament (tent not provided).

Logo Included on all printed materials and banner.

Bronze Level Sponsor \$250

Logo included on all printed flyers and social media (group posts).

Sponsorship proceeds will go directly to Ann's New Life to raise awareness of the importance of ALL human life. If you want to sponsor, contact Ann's New Life at (205) 338-4580.

Assignments—April 14~ April 18

WEDNESDAY MASS

4/14/2021 7:00 PM

Lector: Teri Gagliano

Ministers: Deacon

SATURDAY MASS

4/17/2021 5:00 PM

Greeters: Paige Everett, Loretta Frost

Lector: Susan Moseley

Ministers: Deacon

Ushers: Mark McRae, Amy Carreker

SUNDAY MASS

4/18/2021 8:30 AM

Greeters: Janice Stella, S&L Routzahn

Lector: Bart Perry

Ministers: Deacon

Ushers: Michael Gagliano, Bill Bethel
John Cardenas, Carly Sadler

4/18/2021 11:15 AM

Greeters: E&M Barker, Lydia Smith

Lector: Miranda Bryant

Ministers: Deacon

Ushers: Chris Gallegly, Andy Payant
Emily Bluhm, Jerrold Bluhm

If you are unable to keep your assignment, please find a substitute.



For faith formation this LENT,
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code: JRQNH8



*"Blessed are they who did not see,
and yet believed."*

Looking Ahead...

April 11– RE : 9:45 am—11 am/
Confirmation Practice at 9:45 am
for Confirmands (and Sponsors if
they can make it).

April 13 - Confirmation @ 6pm
(Confirmands arrive at 5 pm)

April 17—2021 First Communion
Retreat: 10 am until 2 pm in the
church hall

April 18— RE : 9:45 am—11 am/
Youth Group meets from 12:15 - 2
pm

Youth Group



(Grades 5th thru 12th!)

***Join us for FOOD, FUN,
and FELLOWSHIP! Sunday,
April 18th after the 11:15
mass!***

*For more information contact our
Youth Ministers, Carly Sadler (205)
837-8888 & Jordan Rawson (205)
863-5787*

(Follow Us on Facebook and Instagram!)

VISITS TO THOSE STUCK AT HOME

If you or someone you know would like a phone call or a visit from Father Bill or one of the deacons, please let us know. We would like to encourage anyone who feels discouraged at this time. We can visit in person or over the phone. We can bring communion if desired. The phone numbers are:

- Father Bill Lucas, 205-383-8134
 - Deacon Terry Rumore, 205-253-9223
 - Deacon Lee Robinson, 205-936-9330;
 - Deacon Serge Brazzolotto, 205-753-3230.
- You may also call the office at 205-525-5161.

NEW DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Our current Director of Religious Education, Kelly Cardenas, will be leaving that position after May 16th. We thank Kelly for guiding the religious education of our parish during this most difficult year.

The parish will be hiring a new Director of Religious Education. If you are interested in finding out more information about this paid, part time position, contact Father Bill at the office. The number is 205-525-5161.

Calendar for April 11 - April 18 2021

Sunday-April 11-

Divine Mercy Sunday

Mass 8:30 am & 11:15 am
 RE- 9:45 am
 Confessions 2:00-3:00 pm
 Divine Mercy Chaplet- 3:00 pm

Monday- April 12

Mass 9:00 am

Tuesday- April 13

Mass 9:00 am
 Confirmation- 6:00 pm

Wednesday-April 14

Mass 7:00 pm
 Adoration/Holy Hour 7:30-8:30 pm 

Thursday- April 15

Mass 9:00 am


Friday- April 16

Mass 9:00 am

Saturday- April 17

1st Communion Retreat- 10:00 am-2:00 pm
 Reconciliation 4:00-4:45 pm
 Mass 5:00 pm

Sunday-April 18

Mass 8:30 am & 11:15 am
 RE- 9:45 am
 Youth Group 12:15 am-2:00 pm
 Holy Hour 7:00-8:00 pm 

Homelessness 101

Interactive Training
 St. Clair County

Thursday, April 22, 2021
 11 AM - 1 PM

Brook Besor Coffee House
 4204 Martin Street S, Cropwell, AL 35054
 (Next to Courtyard Motel)

Lunch: On your own
 Some refreshments will be available and purchases can be made at Brook Besor

FREE TO ATTEND

Mari Culver
 St. Clair County Services Coalition
 Training space provided by Brook Besor

Would You Like to Learn:

- Tools needed to assist homeless?
 - Best Practices to end it?
 - How you can help?
- If so, contact Mari Culver,
 205-525-0071



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UPDATE

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APRIL 2021

Learning to See through the Eyes of Mercy

BERNIE RONAN, PHD

The day Jesus of Nazareth walked into the tax collector's den and called Matthew was a compelling moment. Surely Matthew was compelled, for he followed without hesitation (Matthew 9:9–13). The dynamism persists: The story found its way into three of the Gospels; 700 years later it captivated the Venerable Bede; 800 years after Bede it enthralled an artist named Caravaggio, resulting in the famous painting *The Calling of St. Matthew*. And several decades ago, a young Argentinian named Jorge Bergoglio reaffirmed the incident's forcefulness. It is at this point in the sustenance of the tale of Matthew's merciful calling—through the juxtaposition of meanings in a person, a painting, and a Latin sentence—that we, too, should become compelled.





Peeling back these layers of meaning reveals and illuminates what it means to be mercifully called. For Bergoglio, the first call came at age seventeen. He recalls how, on the first day of spring in 1953 (also the feast of St. Matthew), he was going to a party when he decided, on a whim, to stop at church and go to confession. The experience changed his life; he felt the call from God to become a priest. “The loving face of God crossed my path and invited me to follow him,” he recounted.

Fast-forward to his election as Pope Francis and his first interview. Asked, “Who is Jorge Bergoglio?” he replied: “I am a sinner.” Being a sinner forgiven by God defines him. How likely is it that any of us would answer this question similarly? What does it mean, that the leader of the Catholic Church defines himself by his sinfulness? The simple answer? The experience of mercy, as seen in the Gospel where Jesus calls and forgives Matthew, arcs like a rainbow over Francis’ life. He experienced life-changing forgiveness that day as a teen on the feast of St. Matthew. Thanks partly to his ministries, he returned to Rome often, where he visited the French national church, San Luigi dei Francesi, to reflect on the compelling scene painted by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

The Calling of St. Matthew is seen as one of the great paintings of all time. Though it has a majestic sweep, its subject and portrayal are mundane, dense with the drama of the everyday. With Caravaggio’s characteristic genius for light that illumines but does more than just brighten, the scene is backlit by a beam shining in from an unseen window on Matthew and his visage, while casting Jesus and his companion, Peter, partly in golden shadow. But the artist deftly guides the eye to Matthew and Jesus and their interaction. We see Jesus’ face from the side, shaded, a look that’s difficult to surmise. Matthew’s face is better lit, though still inscrutable. However, the painting’s focus is on the fingers of the two—Jesus’ languid hand outstretched, beckoning and conveying heartfelt forgiveness. By contrast, Matthew’s left hand seems to actually declaim, alive with speech: “Who, me? Why me? What does it mean to ‘follow’ you? Now?”

Suffusing this scene is its subtext, oozing from the canvas: sin, opprobrium, scandal, and judgment. Jesus is picking a scoundrel to be his disciple, someone scorned and hated by his own people. A “publican” like Matthew took from the Jews their meager earnings in the form of taxes, which he then gave to the

Romans. However, Bergoglio saw something else at work in the scene that trumped scandal: mercy. Bergoglio saw a sinner, like him, one who was being both forgiven and chosen.

Bergoglio saw this because he viewed this salvific scene through the prism of a Latin sentence that resonated with him. Each year on the feast of St. Matthew, a date he'd held dear since his teenage years, the priest would contemplate a reading in his breviary written by St. Bede the Venerable. In the eighth century, commenting on this fateful scene from Matthew's life, Bede penned this beautiful sentence, from which Bergoglio would pluck three words to serve as the motto on his coat of arms as bishop and as pope: *Miserando atque eligendo*. The sentence and some possible translations follow:

*Vidit ergo Iesus publicanum,
et quia miserando atque eligendo vidit,
ait illi, "Sequere me."*

Jesus saw the tax collector
in a way that expressed both mercy and selection
and said to him, "Follow me."

The Catholic News Service says the three-word Latin motto means, "because he saw him through the eyes of mercy and chose him." Bede's brilliance is seen in the virtually untranslatable density and interconnection of the three words Bergoglio chose for his motto. The first word seems to be key to understanding and capturing Bergoglio's interpretation. *Vidit* means "he saw"—"Jesus saw the publican." But how did he see this tax collector? Bede explains by adding a phrase with a conjunction, *quia* ("because"), followed by two gerunds, *miserando* ("pitying, forgiving"), and *eligendo* ("choosing").

These gerunds, or verbal nouns—one expressing an act of mercy, the other an act of choice or selection—are joined by the conjunction *atque*. This conjunction usually connotes something more than and, often something causal or sequential. So there are possible nuances in translation—the selection comes because of the mercy. First comes the mercy. Then the choices—namely, election and forgiveness—occur hand-in-glove.

Jesus looks upon Matthew with compassion, and Bede says that the call comes because of and through this special way of seeing. Because Jesus viewed the publican with a gaze that was both forgiving and indicated choosing, he therefore said to him, "Follow me." In harmony with Bede's interpretation, Bergoglio describes what happened to him at seventeen: "That is the way he saw me, and that is how he wants me to look at others, with compassion, as if I were choosing them for him, not excluding anyone, because everyone is chosen by the love of God."

In Caravaggio's painting, you can almost hear Bergoglio's words resounding through Matthew's head as he looks out to Jesus, pointing to him: *pierced by God's look of love...caught with my guard down...the loving face of God crossed my path and invited me to follow him*. Jesus' appraisal of this despised man was colored by the mercy he showered on everyone he met, the mercy that paralleled all he did. And in one fell swoop, Jesus saw Matthew as a greedy extortionist, forgave him, and called him to follow in his way. Merciful election hinges on

sight. Because Bede saw two dynamics under way, forgiving and choosing, Bergoglio did, too. Bergoglio's experience suggests that Jesus forgives and chooses when he calls each of us to follow him. Vocation for Christians takes place through a redemptive and undeserved mix of mercy and election.

The theology and spirituality of Christian vocation tend to focus not on forgiving but on electing. The will of the individual in choosing the religious vocation is to be informed by, even driven by, the choice God has made in selecting the individual. But Bede later writes that Matthew is moved to follow Jesus "by an invisible, interior impulse flooding his mind with the light of grace." This impulse, laden with grace, is shaped by both the acts of forgiveness and being chosen. Since Jesus is, for the believer, "divine mercy in person"—as Pope Benedict XVI so cogently phrased it—the call to discipleship is always issued mercifully.

The merciful call comes from the world, and it is costly. To paraphrase Dietrich Bonhoeffer, when Christ calls us, he bids us to come and die. The death that follows can take the dramatic form it did for Matthew, as depicted in Caravaggio's painting, but for most of us, the calling, like the dying, comes in countless daily acts whereby the person follows by regularly and routinely dispensing mercy to others in line with that which was shown to him when he was mercifully called. As Bergoglio wrote in the prayer he shared on the eve of his ordination: "I believe in the death that is experienced from day to day, a burning death from which I flee, but which smiles at me, inviting me to accept it." Christ calls us, mercifully, today to die to self and to follow him by showing mercy today. We can answer the call by imitating Christ, who "emptied" himself through his mercy-driven life, ending in death (Philippians 2:7).

How does this merciful call come to us from the world? In a circle meant to be virtuous, Christ calls us from the world, embodied in the poor, silently pleading that we show mercy. And it is the same Christ who lavishes on us the grace to answer that call. We are both mercifully called and called to mercy.

Mercy, after all, is a form of love, which John's Gospel says is the closest we can get to a definition of God. Since mercy is love shown in external words and actions, Aquinas says, "The sum total of the Christian religion consists in mercy." What does merciful love entail? It denotes forgiveness, pity, compassion, empathy and pardon, and is best summarized in the "works of mercy." It is prominently featured in the Last Judgment scene in Matthew 25:31–46, where Christ directs "sheep" to heaven and "goats" to hell. The judging, in fact, has in one sense already taken place, through the deeds of those standing before the throne of God. Their lives are their judge. And when told they are condemned for not serving Jesus in his state of hunger, nakedness, and thirst, we hear (and may sympathize with) the goats' famous, dumbfounded plea: "When did we see *you* hungry?" Seeing is the key, as Jesus' answer sounds through the years to us today: "Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me." The goats didn't get a pass because they couldn't recognize Jesus. Their failing to mercifully love condemns them. Through the mystery of the Incarnation, Jesus is now found in the poor. He waits to be seen.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta relates her encounters with the poor and lonely as meeting Christ in "his most distressing disguise."

In her own life, she felt called by God to leave the comfort of her convent and answer the call that came from the world in the suffering and dying she saw all over Calcutta. She saw the need because of mercy. Her way of seeing followed the logic of the Latin word for mercy, *misericordia*: *Miseria* denotes “wretchedness, misery, poverty of every stripe”; *cor* is the word for “heart.” Mercy is about loving—having the heart for—misery, not for its own sake but because it is divinely embodied before me now. For St. Teresa, too, vision was key, as she prayed: “Give me the eyes of faith.” And as she reminds us, our wealthy societies are also filled with the poor: the lonely, the distraught, the despairing, the desolate, those consumed by anger and fear.

Why the poor? The intellectual reason is found in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount where Jesus calls the poor *Makários* (“blessed”) because they need God. When we see someone who is *poor* (“hungry, saddened, abused”), we see someone who—aware or not—needs God. In that sense, in our vulnerable need, each of us is poor. As Francis, bishop of Rome, said to a group of his fellow citizens, “It would be good if every Roman were neglected, then they would feel the need for God.”

As Catholics, many of us are aware of all this; yet do we see mercy as active love shown to others as a central focus of our Christian living? Perhaps we saw in Caravaggio’s masterpiece recruitment and not forgiveness, *eligendo* and not *miserando*. For many of us, mercy is the private sense we have of our sins being forgiven, a feature of our devotional life. Let us embrace the acts of compassion and care calling to us each day as we recognize that both our shriven sins and the care we show toward others—especially the downtrodden—are connected. Both are works of mercy.

Consider the significance of the song we sing at Mass, the “Agnus Dei” (Lamb of God). “Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.” Shame is a grace, Francis reminds us, because as we sing, we recall our own sins, an opportunity to once more feel forgiveness, mercy. Shame then leads us, riding the words of the “Agnus Dei,” into all the sinful, merciless places and events in our world—all bathed in the blood of the lamb. A lamb, the most innocent, helpless, and undeserving of slaughter, metaphorically reminds us that we are forgiven through

an abundance of love that suffuses the whole of creation, a slaying that “takes away the sins of the world.” To paraphrase Bergoglio’s nineteenth-century Jesuit confrere Gerard Manley Hopkins: We are enraptured by mercy, like we are by air.

One of Pope Francis’ frequently used Italian words is *sguardo*. It can mean “a look,” “a longer gaze,” or “a brief glance.” A beautiful example is found in the official prayer from the Jubilee Year of Mercy (2016), so evocative of the insight Francis gained from Caravaggio and Bede: “Your loving gaze (*sguardo*) freed Matthew from being enslaved by money.”

Two other examples of *sguardi* help us to see mercifully like Pope Francis.

One took place when Francis stood in prayer next to Timothy Cardinal Dolan at the 9/11 Memorial in 2015, two priests staring into the abyss of remembered yet unspeakable horror. They are both visibly moved as they gaze, riveted, into the middle distance, in a manner associated with being deep in prayer, gripped by the tragedy memorialized before them. Yet their sorrowful seeing is suffused with the mercy that flows from what Leo the



PHOTO COURTESY OF ABC30 IN FRESNO

Great called “the catastrophe of the cross.” The ancient hymn *Ave crux, spes unica* captures how counterintuitive Christianity is at its core: “Behold the cross, our only hope.” This phrase aptly frames what Christianity relies on: “omnipotent weakness.” Mercy conquers tragedy.

Francis’ other *sguardo*, evident of mercy, was more a glance than a gaze. After climbing into his car to make his way to the Philadelphia airport in 2015, he looked out of the vehicle as it drove off and saw a young man in a wheelchair among the crowd lining the route. He asked the driver to stop, got out of the car, walked to the young man...and kissed him (see photo). He was called by seeing this young man’s poverty, his need, and the need summoned mercy in Francis—mercy’s call.

Just as the teenage Jorge Bergoglio decided to walk with the Lord when “the loving face of God crossed my path and invited me to follow him,” may all of us respond with an enthusiastic yes to the invitation of the call of mercy.

Bernard “Bernie” Ronan, PhD (1950–2016), was a public administrator and public policy researcher. Bernie’s Catholic faith and his philosophy took him to Gregorian University in Rome, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in theology.

Dear Reader: Beginning in June 2021, Liguori Publications will produce one edition of *Catholic Update* for the months of June and July. Subscribers will be invited to view bonus digital content in July. We thank you for understanding and greatly appreciate your continued support. —Editor

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EDITOR: ELIZABETH A. HERZING-GEBHART