

Avila News

PRAYER, SACRIFICE, SERVICE, AND STUDY

FIFTY-SECOND YEAR VOLUME II

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NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2023



REGULAR MEETING AND HOLY HOUR

Wednesday,
November 15, 2023

PLEASE GATHER IN
FOUNDERS' ROOM
AT 10:00AM

HOLY HOUR WILL BEGIN
AT 10:30AM

Followed by Community
Mass with Seminarians,
Luncheon, and Speaker.

SPEAKER:

Reverend Michael Stalla
Coordinator for
Pastoral Formation
Center for Pastoral Leadership

As always, friends/guests are most welcome! Please contact Chris Ryan at 440-983-0805 or chrisryan78@myyahoo.com, no later than noon on Monday, November 13, if you cannot attend or to make additional reservations. Guest donation is \$13.00. Please remember to bring your Holy Hour Prayer Book. **Members:** Please leave your full name and phone number when calling to cancel reservation. Also, please note that **ALL Avila Members** have a standing reservation and need to call in cancellations when necessary. **Members who are unable to regularly attend meetings and cannot call to cancel luncheon reservations might consider becoming a sustaining member.** Thank you.

President's Corner

The month of November is a time in which we remember all those who have died. We remember the Holy Souls in Purgatory whose feast day is November 2. November is the end of the Liturgical Year. It is also the time of year that we remember all that we are thankful for.

The month of December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is celebrated on December 8. From all eternity, God chose with infinite wisdom the woman who would be the Mother of His Divine Son.

I was very happy to see so many members at our September meeting. It was good to be together again to pray for our priests during Adoration and Holy Mass, and for lunch. Our guest speaker, Father Brankatelli, was very inspiring. We had 68 members in attendance, including 17 guests, 7 of which became new members! At our November meeting, we will install the new Avila members who have joined in the last year.

As Avila members, we are always called to pray for our priests, seminarians, and religious, that more young men and women answer the call for the priesthood and religious life.

Please accept my sincere wishes to all for a very Happy Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas!

Blessings, Marianne

FATHER JOSEPH BRANKATELLI – SEPTEMBER SPEAKER

Father was always a faithful Catholic and never denied the existence of God, and when he was a senior in high school, he went through a religious awakening. He attended a Methodist youth group as the Catholic youth group was not that strong. He went on a retreat and there he realized that we live Christianity every single day. One day he was praying before Mass and had an awareness that God was calling him to be a priest, and, like every good young man he said, "no" and forgot about it. This was not something he had ever thought about; he had always thought about getting married and raising a family. Six months later, he brought it up with his family but decided to attend college, though he was still actively discerning the priesthood and attended several Come and See Weekends while away in addition to regularly meeting with a spiritual director. He realized he couldn't ignore this any more, and called the vocation director when he returned to Cleveland. He entered the seminary in 2001 and took it one day at a time, then one year at a time and was ordained in 2008.

Some time later, he baptized the baby of a good friend who had been in the Army who told him there were no chaplains to help the soldiers, and Father's heart was broken, and this conversation started a long discernment process. The chaplaincy is a vocation within a vocation. Archbishop Broglio, a Cleveland native himself, used this terminology. These words are accurate. To be chaplain, you need to be an ordained minister. Requirements are to be physically fit, so he had to say no to all the cookies that the good ladies at Holy Family Parish made for him. Even though chaplains are ordained ministers and Father Brankatelli is a priest,

they are still soldiers, and they do everything that soldiers do except for combat training. He participated in a modified boot camp for chaplains, a simplified very condensed three month course. When it was ten degrees at 6 o'clock in the morning he was running with the soldier with icicles in his hair, and when it was 100 degrees outside and the sun was beating down on him with 100 percent humidity with his rucksack on, he was walking up and down hills with the soldiers. One needed to be able to showcase that you are athletic. He went into the Army at age 32, which is considered middle age. Most people in their 30's are already half way in their career. Physical fitness is one element. Sometimes a chaplain must just need to say "yes Sir" or "yes Maam." If you can't take orders from commanding officers who were never Christian, let alone Catholic, and can't serve all soldiers of all denominations, it might be too difficult to be a chaplain. Military chaplains (both men and women chaplains) are unique people with unique gifts who sacrifice much to go into the service. They give up the comforts of serving in a rectory and being close to family and friends for eight to ten years.

Chaplains do not only serve soldiers of their own faith denominations, but all soldiers. Father would be assigned to a unit of 700 or 800 soldiers and their families; this was his own mini-church. He would sometimes be called on the weekends to serve them. Many of them were not Christian, most of them were not Catholic and most did not have any faith beliefs at all. So how does the chaplain bring God into a conversation either overtly or covertly? Father often asked them to talk about their lives; the three biggest things that most soldiers struggle with is what is expected of them in the Army, marital problems, and mental illness. Marriage is difficult enough to begin with, coupled with the Army Environment and being away from one's spouse, sometimes for nine to fifteen months. We must not jump to

conclusions and say that PTSD was the cause of mental illness in soldiers because of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; this was not always the case. As his years in the Army went on he saw that most of the soldiers struggling with suicidal ideations were those who never left the States. Young men and women today are struggling with perplex social, economic, and family dynamics that are causing much stress, coupled with the up-tempo of what is expected of them, plus the advent of social media. Many soldiers do not know how to sort through their issues. For some, suicide became an option, not just for the soldiers, but also for their families. So chaplains serve all people in various ways. This was an opportunity for Father to see the beauty of humanity, sometimes its difficulty. Chaplains become Swiss army knives in the toolboxes of the commanders. They provide religious support; Catholic chaplains celebrate Mass and hear Confessions. But sometimes a soldier needed a behavior health specialist: call a chaplain. Sometimes a moral boost was needed: call a chaplain. Sometimes a family get-together had to be organized: call a chaplain.

As Avilas, how is this important to you, and how are you connected to chaplains, even those who are not Catholic? It begins with our prayers. Never, never underestimate the power of our prayers. There are a number of men who are discerning whether or not to become military chaplains. They have no idea what to expect when the Lord calls them to be chaplains in uniform, particularly if they are called to serve overseas. Our prayers are vital for their welfare. Chaplains are so good at taking care of others that they forget to take care of themselves. The Army is not going to take care of the chaplains if they are not going to take care of themselves. Our prayers are vital for the need for military chaplains. It goes with praying for priests in general; obviously if there are more priests there is more availability to have chaplains. The number of service members are not going to decrease, but the number of priests are. When Father left the United States Army a year ago there was a need for 150 to 200 chaplains of all denominations. Chaplains can provide the one essential element that can never be taken away from soldiers from any faith denomination: their constitutional right to pray. Chaplains give up a lot of things as soldiers; they don't get in their cars and go where they want to go (that's AWOL, you go to jail for that). They don't pray whenever they want (that's a dereliction of duty). They can't say no to their commander (that's disobeying lawful orders). The one thing that can't be taken away from chaplains or any soldier for that matter is their ability to pray. There are not enough chaplains, let alone Catholic priests, to pray with our soldiers. So we need the Avilas' prayers for that. When our soldiers are taken care of, our country is better. When the Muslim soldiers and Protestant soldiers and Catholic soldiers are taken care of, our country is better.

Avilas, don't be afraid to encourage more men to go into the priesthood. What else can we do as Avilas? Just be wholesome Catholics. If we are married, show the world a wholesome marriage. If you are parents, show the world a good example of parenthood. If you are grandparents, be wholesome grandparents. Whatever your vocation, be strong and steadfast; be visible witnesses to this world of the need for God in our lives and in doing so to produce good wholesome Catholics because when our Church has good wholesome Catholics there will be good wholesome vocations, some of which may be the priesthood and religious. Father's ten years in the Army were fruitful, and he was able to go all over the world. Besides all those things he was able to do, the thing he is most proud of is that he was able to serve soldiers in their difficulties and struggles of life. He is grateful for those opportunities. Father's favorite psalm is Psalm 22, and he encouraged us to read it, especially during Holy Week, most especially on Good Friday.



**Ruth Merriman
Arch Tunnell**



**For prayer requests contact Joan Evans at
joanevans1130ad@gmail.com or
440-331-2383.**



**The family and friends
of long time Avila
Rita Traska.**

**God bless,
Susan Federico
Newsletter & Meditations**



“There is but one road which reaches God and that is *PRAYER*;
if anyone shows you another, you are being deceived.” *Saint Teresa of Avila*

November 2023

Please include the special intentions of the members of the following groups

November	5, 2023	Missionaries of Our Lady of LaSalette
November	12, 2023	Sisters of the Living Word (SLW)
November	19, 2023	Society of Mary (Marianists) (SM)
November	26, 2023	Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers (MM)
December	3, 2023	Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (HMSS)

MUCH TO BE GRATEFUL FOR

Thanksgiving Day is not a holy day, but it certainly goes hand in hand with our life of faith. Gratitude is central to the Gospel message and Thanksgiving Day presents us with the perfect opportunity to be eternally and deeply grateful. We give thanks, first and foremost, because it is God's will that we do so. God's Word is filled with calls to thanksgiving, both in the Old and New Testaments, especially in the Psalms:

***“In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)***

“Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.” (Philippians 4:6)

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his mercy endures forever.” (Psalm 118:1)

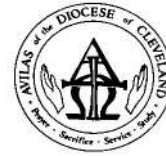
“Therefore, we who are receiving the unshakable kingdom should have gratitude, with which we should offer worship pleasing to God in reverence and awe.” (Hebrews 12:28)

How grateful to God are you? Gratitude is the appropriate response to God who redeems and sustains us. We may struggle in different ways with gratitude. We will never be grateful unless we can clearly see all that God has done for us. It's so easy in life to focus on all the struggles we face and, as a result, to get depressed, frustrated and even angry at times. It is far more challenging to look beyond the crosses and burdens we face each day to see the abundance of grace and mercy the Lord has given us. Unless we can see that mercy and grace, we will struggle greatly with authentic gratitude.

By practicing an attitude of thanksgiving in our daily lives, we can follow the model set by Jesus Himself, who expressed gratitude to the Father throughout His life and ministry. Let us be thankful and learn to express our thanks daily to God for His innumerable blessings, providential care and protection and for the unconditional pardon given to us for our daily sins and failures, to our relatives and friends for their loving support, timely help and encouragement, to our priests for the sincere service they render us.

So on this Thanksgiving, reflect upon this simple question: Do I see all that God has done for me? Do I see His abundance of mercy in my life? In Luke 17:11-19, Jesus healed ten lepers, but only one returned to express his gratitude. We must not be like the nine who failed to return. If so, you might struggle with seeing all the true and abundant blessings from God. If you see you struggle with having total gratitude, you will have taken the first step to taking the first step to developing the deeper gratitude you should have. Being grateful means you see the truth clearly. Be open to that truth and God will change your life as He fills you with joy!

***Lord, please do fill my heart with an abundance of gratitude.
Help me to turn my eyes to Your infinite grace and mercy.
Help me to see beyond the struggles of life and the burdens that get me down.
In place of these, help me to become increasingly aware
of all You have done for me and all that You continue to do.
Jesus, I trust in You.***



"There is but one road which reaches God and that is *PRAYER*;
if anyone shows you another, you are being deceived." *Saint Teresa of Avila*

December 2023

Please include the special intentions of the members of the following groups in your Holy Hour this month:

December	3, 2023	Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (HMSS)
December	10, 2023	Sisters of Mercy of the Americas (RSM)
December	17, 2023	Social Mission Sisters (SM)
December	24, 2023	For all Missionaries Serving throughout the World
December	31, 2023	Sisters of the Most Holy Trinity (OSST)
January	7, 2024	Sisters of Notre Dame (SND)

STRANGE THINGS HAPPEN ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT

Jesus Christ is still present among His brothers and sisters 2000 years after His initial appearance. Christmas affords us an excellent opportunity to reflect well on the Most Blessed Sacrament and to ask ourselves how we reverence the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

Jesuit Father Segundo Llorente (1906-1989) was an outstanding missionary to the faithful of Alaska. A brilliant and humble priest, he spent himself in the service of the indigenous of Alaska for decades. Years ago, in the meditation entitled, "Strange Things Happen on the Night of Christmas," this Spanish religious offered his thoughts on the adoration due the Most Blessed Sacrament. This powerful essay, which was published in the February 1989 newsletter of the Catholic Society of Evangelists, seems more pertinent now than when it was first penned.

A priest told me what happened to him once in his first parish. After the Midnight Mass on Christmas Day, he personally locked the Church. With the keys in his pocket, he went to his room and had a good sleep. At 7:30 in the morning, he got up and went back to the Church intending to have one hour of prayer all to himself. He opened the side door leading to the sacristy, turned on a light and then turned on the lights for the Church. As he opened the door and walked into the Church, he literally froze. Strange people clad in the poorest of clothes occupied most of the pews and all were in total silence. No one as much as wiggled and nobody cared to look at him. A small group was standing by the Nativity scene contemplating the manger in total silence. The priest recovered quickly and in a loud voice asked them how they got in. Nobody answered. He walked closer to them and asked again, "Who let you in?" A woman answered totally unconcerned, "strange things happen on the night of Christmas." And back to total silence. The priest went to check the main door and found it locked just as he had left it. He was determined to get the facts, and he turned his face to the pews, but they were empty. The people had vanished. He kept this puzzle to himself for some time. Unable to hold it in any longer, he told me just what I have written here. Could I help with any plausible explanation? Let me hurry to say that the priest in question is a model of sanity and is well educated academically.

My explanation was and still is as follows: Those were dead people who were doing their purgatory or part of it in the Church. It is safe to assume that we atone for our sins where we committed them. Those people were immersed in total silence. Why? Consider the irreverence's committed before the Blessed Sacrament: chatting, giggling, looking around. After Mass, people gather around in small groups with no regard for Christ's presence in the tabernacle. Why did they vanish? They did not vanish. They simply became invisible but remained tied to their pews unable to utter a single word to atone for their disrespectful chatter while living. The Blessed Sacrament is no laughing matter. There is a price tag to all we do or say. Those people had to give the Blessed Sacrament the adoration and respect that Christ deserves. For how long? Only God can answer that. Why did the priest see them? So he could pray for them and for all the other souls detained in other Churches. Why were they clad in poor clothes? To atone for their vanity while living. People often use clothes not so much to cover their nakedness but as a status symbol to impress others. But God is not impressed by mink coats. Also, some people walk into Church with hardly any clothes and in the summer months it is not uncommon to see people receive Jesus in the most indecent clothing. The pastor may or may not put up with it, but God will have His say some day. The Sacred Heart of Emmanuel Who comes to us is really truly and substantially present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar and is to be praised, adored, and loved with grateful affection at every moment in all the tabernacles of the world even until the end of time. Amen.

By Monsignor Charles M. Mangan c/o Mary Ann Takacs