

# ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

833 Main Street  
Agawam, MA 01001

[www.stjohnagawam.com](http://www.stjohnagawam.com)

[sje.information@gmail.com](mailto:sje.information@gmail.com)

Office Phone: 413-786-8105 | Fax: 413-455-3100



## Welcome!

No matter what your present status in the Catholic Church,  
No matter what your family or marital situation,  
No matter what your past or present religious affiliation,  
No matter what your personal history, background, race or other,  
No matter what your own self-image or esteem,  
You are invited, welcomed, accepted, loved and respected here at St. John's.

## EUCCHARIST:

Lord's Day Mass: *Saturday 4:00 pm, Sunday 8:00 am, 10:30 am, 1:30 pm (Extraordinary Form), & 5:00 pm*  
Weekday Mass: Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Friday at 8:00 am & Wednesday at 6:00 pm | Adoration: Wed. 12:00 - 6:00 pm

CONFESSION: Saturday 2:45 to 3:45 pm, Wednesday 4:30 to 5:30 pm, or by Appointment.

BAPTISM: Please call Deacon Dave Picard through the parish office to schedule.

MARRIAGE: To be arranged at least one year in advance. Please call the office.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK: Is available in the Confessional every Saturday or see Father after Mass. If you or a loved one needs Father to come to you, please call the parish office.

CONFIRMATION: Takes place in 11th Grade, please contact the Director of Religious Education to enroll in classes. If you are an adult and need to make your Confirmation, please contact the same office and ask about the RCIA program.

HOLY ORDERS: Are you thinking about a vocation to the priesthood or religious life? Please call Fr. Pierz at the parish office, or call the Office of Vocations at (413) 452-0811.

PARISH MISSION STATEMENT: *We are a Roman Catholic community inspired by the Holy Spirit to follow the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by sharing, growing and spreading God the Father's love through our parish ministries, and by coming together as a community in meaningful prayer and worship to celebrate that love.*

**February 28, 2021—Second Sunday of Lent**

## **SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT**

*Abraham offers the ultimate sacrifice of thanksgiving, the gift of his very son. This sacrifice prefigures the sacrifice of Jesus who died for us all. In his transfiguration, Jesus discloses a suffering messiahship.*

### **PARISH OFFICE HOURS**

*Monday-Thursday - 9:00 am - 3:00 pm*

*Friday - Closed*

**Pastor:** Fr. Michael Pierz

sje.priest@gmail.com

**Parochial Vicar:** Fr. Barrent Pease

sje.curate@gmail.com

**Deacon:** Deacon Dave Picard

sje.deacon@gmail.com

**Priest in Residence:** Fr. Sinh Trinh

**Priest in Retirement:** Fr. John Lis

**Office Manager:** Andreana Perkins

sje.operationsmanager@gmail.com

**Reception Volunteer:** Mary Talarico

**Pastoral Ministry to Sick & Homebound:**

Francesca Brandt

sje.homebound@gmail.com

**Director of "In the Beginning"**

**Pre-School Ministry:** Claire Riberdy (Interim)

sje.religioeducation@gmail.com

**Pre-School Teachers:** Gabriela Marafuge

**Director of Religious Education:** Claire Riberdy

sje.religioeducation@gmail.com

**Director of Music Ministry:** Isabella Manning

sje.musicdirector@gmail.com

**Maintenance Supervisor:** Anthony Fernandes

sje.maintenance@gmail.com

**Child Advocate:** Mary Beth Swindell

Private Line: (860) 386-6009

### **Finance Council:**

Charles Calisti

Cecile Fragoso

Ted Muszynski

David Ross

Joseph Searles

### **Pastoral Council:**

Judy Cross-Donahue (Chair)

Ben Auld

Megan Baillargeon

Mikie Cook

Luke Hollwedel

Dorota Maliszewska

Leo Marinak

James Perkins

Sarah Ross

Jane Seaver

Cara Waterman

Debbie Whitehead

**Bulletin Submissions are due 9 days prior to print**

**Email: [sje.parishsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:sje.parishsecretary@gmail.com)**

## ***Thoughts from the Rectory ...***

Dear friends of St. John the Evangelist,

Continuing our way through Lent, we are blessed in our growing relationship with the Lord. May our practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving continue to give us opportunity for deeper intimacy with the Lord and a share in His Christian Mission with the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

Similarly, we are blessed in our growing relationship with one another, especially the candidates and catechumens preparing for Christian initiation and full reception in Christ's Church. Here at St. John's we are blessed with baptized men and women who are completing their studies and inquiries so as to be received into full communion. These candidates participated in the Rite of Election last Sunday with Bishop Byrne at the Cathedral, and were supported by family, friends, and the great volunteers of our RCIA team. Congratulations on your continuing journey and God be praised in our faithful volunteers and teachers!

You've probably heard the phrase before, "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb". Beginning a new month tomorrow, may we feel less the ferocity of winter and more the docility of spring. Even more, may we keep the enthusiasm and fierce drive to make our way through this next month, knowing that the Sacred Triduum of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil awaits us in the first days of April.

Let this be a good and holy month!

*St. John the Evangelist, pray for us!*

**Fr. Pierz**



## MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

### Saturday, February 27th—Second Sunday of Lent

4:00 pm—For the People

### Sunday, February 28th

8:00 am—Jonathan Kratovil†

Birthday Remembrance

Requested by Marcella Kratovil

10:30 am—Tony, Fe, Arnay Melodia†

Requested by Thel Melodia

1:30 pm (EF) —William Gorham †

Requested by daughter and son-in-law

5:00 pm—Private Intention

### Monday, March 1st

8:00 am—George and Ruth Trevethan †

Requested by Family

### Tuesday, March 2nd

8:00 am—Emile and Annette Schilling†

Requested by granddaughter

### Wednesday, March 3rd—Saint Katharine Drexel, Virgin

6:00 pm—Marie Rose McManus and for all unborn children †

Requested by the family

### Thursday, March 4th—Saint Casimir

8:00 am—Phil and Jean Raiche †

Requested by Paula and David

### Friday, March 5th

8:00 am—Maria Waterman and Birthday Remembrance †

Requested by a friend of the family

### Saturday, March 6th—Third Sunday of Lent

8:00 am—Bill Frasco†

Requested by his mother-in-law

4:00 pm—Muriel Birchenough †

Requested by the Catholic Women's Club

### Sunday, March 7th

8:00 am—For the People

10:30 am—Tony, Fe, Arnay Melodia†

Requested by Thel Melodia

1:30 pm (EF) —Repose of the Souls of Joseph Frissora and Margaret Jean Frissora†

Requested by Sarah Rodeo

5:00 pm—Private Intention

## **SANCTUARY LAMP**

**FEBRUARY 28—MARCH 6, 2021**

WILL BE LIT IN MEMORY OF

**HARRIET HEBERT—16TH ANNIVERSARY**

REQUESTED BY

**FAMILY**

If you would like to request the Sanctuary Candle to be lit in honor of or in memory of someone, please contact the parish office.



### **Please remember in your prayers:**

Please pray for the sick and dying of our parish. Remember all who are in hospitals, nursing homes and homebound. Pray for the hungry, the unemployed and under-employed. Pray for an end to abortion and a true respect for all life, from conception to natural death. Pray for peace. In a concrete way we pray for all those who have died and all the deceased members of our parish and diocese, especially Earl Rivers and Rosemary Levesque.

**Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord.**

*And let perpetual light shine upon them.*

**May they rest in peace. Amen.**

**May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.**

*If you would like to include someone who has recently passed away, please call the parish office or email: [sje.pariahsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:sje.pariahsecretary@gmail.com).*

### **IN MY MOTHER'S ARMS PRAYER LINE:**

If you have a serious intention that you need prayers for: surgery, sufferings, medical, illness, cancer treatment, a sick child, or anything like that, please give Pat (786-3023) or Mary (786-9671) a call and you will have countless rosaries and prayers.

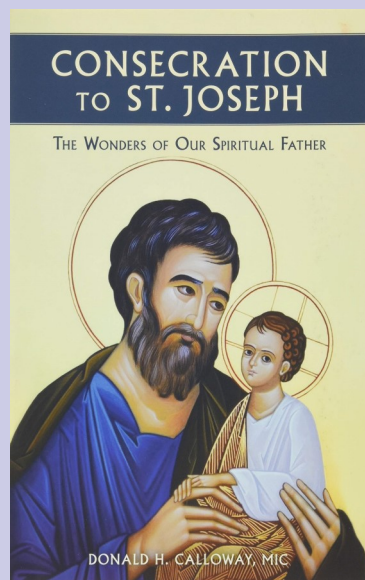


*If anyone else is interested in being a prayer partner, please call Pat or Mary.*



## **Consecration to St. Joseph**

**April 11—May 13**



St. John the Evangelist invites you to participate in Father Calloway's 33-Day Consecration to Saint Joseph. The program consists of 33 days of daily prayers and readings from the book on an individual basis.

Once a week group gatherings are scheduled for faith

sharing.

### **Group Gathering Discussion**

**Mondays, 9—10:30 am**

**April 12, 19, 26, May 3, 10**

(Father Joyce Room at the Pastoral Center)

**Tuesdays, 7-8:30 pm**

**April 13, 20, 27, May 4, 11 (Lower Church)**

Registration is limited to 10 people per class.

Pre-register by calling the Parish Office,  
413-786-8105.

Father Calloway's book can be purchased in book, e-book, or audio book online; or at Spirit Among Us Catholic Bookstore, 200 Center Street, Ludlow, MA (phone: 413-583-4014). St. John Parishioners receive a 10% discount at the Spirit Among Us bookstore.

*The person who consecrates himself to St. Joseph wants to be as close to their spiritual father as possible, to the point of resembling him in virtue and holiness. St. Joseph, in turn, will give those consecrated to him his undivided attention, protection, and guidance.*

—Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC

**Ministry to Sick & Homebound**  
**413-786-8105 ext. 105**

### **PASTORAL MINISTRY HOURS:**

Monday-Thursday from 9am-1pm.

Please leave your name and phone number, including area code, with a brief message if non-urgent. I will return your call as soon as I am able. ALL other calls requiring a priest, speak with our Parish Secretary. Blessings and thank you for your patience.

**FOOD GIFT CARDS:** Your generosity of free will giving is gratefully appreciated by these families in their time of need. Thank you all for who you are and what you do in the name of Jesus Our Lord.

**PRAYER SHAWLS:** If you have a family member, friend, or know a person who is in need of extra comforting care, please feel free to contact our Prayer Shawl Ministry under Ministry to Sick & Homebound. Call Francesca at 413-786-8105 ext. 105. Leave a message and I will get back to you. Only requirement is that the Shawl must be picked up by the person requesting same, and delivered to the person in need of this comfort. There will be a Prayer Card placed with shawl of the knitter who crafted this shawl of prayerful love.

**BEREAVEMENT:** If you have experienced any loss and are in need of Spiritual consoling, please call the Parish Office at 786-8105 ext. 105 for direct line to Pastoral Minister, Francesca. Please leave your name, phone number, including area code, with a message for a return call. All calls are confidential. Blessings.

**HERITAGE WOODS AND HERITAGE HALLS:** No participation at this time.

**HOMEBOUND MINISTRY:** If someone is at home and unable to have their own hands on experience with Our Lord Jesus because of illness or decline in movements because of restrictions, please, if you feel this will help, call me, so that I can reach out to the person and until I can once again visit in person. I will make a personal phone call where we can get to know each other, share our fears, hopes and spiritual likes, if any, and pray together. I will read the Gospel of the day to the infirmed.

**HOSPITAL VISITS:** HIPAA Medical Law restrict access to patient admittance information. Please call the Parish Office if you have a family member admitted to a local hospital in need of a visit by Father Pierz. Follow up in-house visits will be provided per Francesca.

**EVERY MAN IS CALLED TO BE A FATHER.**

DOES GOD WANT **YOU** TO BE A PRIEST,

OR THE FATHER OF A PRIEST?

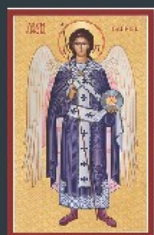
**COME AND PRAY.**



# MASS & HOLY HOUR

WITH BISHOP BYRNE, CELEBRANT AND HOMILIST

## THURS., MARCH 25TH



**FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION**

**6:30 - 8pm**

*St. Michael's Cathedral, Springfield*



Fr. Jon Reardon 413-248-7034 / [vocations@diospringfield.org](mailto:vocations@diospringfield.org)



## Ash Wednesday &

### Weekend of February 21st

*“Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father”*

Weekly: \$3,815

Maintenance: \$363

Fuel: \$87

Loose: \$575.36

Online Giving: \$3,742

Loan Repayment: \$547

Ash Wednesday: \$1,115.26

**Total: \$7,133.62**

*“May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of His name, for our good and the good of all His holy Church.”*

## COMING UP AT ST. JOHN’S

### **Monday, March 1**

6:30 pm: RCIA (FJR)

### **Tuesday, March 2**

2:00 pm: Loaves and Fishes (Kitchen)

### **Thursday, March 4**

10:00 am: Book Study Group (FJR)

7:00 pm: Book Study Group (FJR)

7:00 pm: Spiritual Life Com. (Lower Church)

### **Friday, March 5**

After 8:00 am Mass: Stations of the Cross

6:30 pm: Stations of the Cross

### **Saturday, March 6**

9:00 am (Church, L.C., Gym, FJR)

### **Sunday, March 7**

8:00 am: Take and Eat (Kitchen, FJR)

## **ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST PARISH INVITES YOU!**

## **HOLY HOUR**

**PRAISE & WORSHIP**

*Confession will be available.*

FRIDAY

**MARCH 19TH**

**7 – 9 PM**



Join us to pray in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament through music, quiet prayer, and confession on the Feast of St. Joseph. Come grow closer to Christ through the intercession of good St. Joseph.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST PARISH

833 Main St., Agawam

## **FORMED**

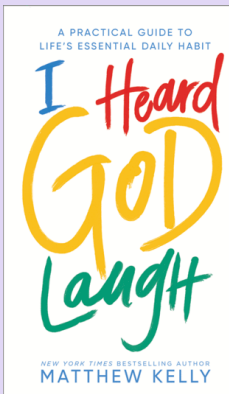
Sign up for free by visiting [formed.org](https://formed.org)!

The Parish code is

available by calling the Parish Office: 786-8105.

*The subscription is free through the Parish. If you have the means, please consider donating to St. John's to help cover the cost of the annual FORMED.org subscription.*

## Lenten Gift & Challenge



This Lent, we challenge ourselves to  
“Prepare the Way of the Lord.”

St. John's is offering you both a gift and challenge to do just that! Copies of “I Heard God Laugh” by Matthew Kelly will be available at Church or the Parish Office during Lent.

## Book Study Group

During 5 Weeks of Lent we will discuss  
***I Heard God Laugh* by Matthew Kelly**

Thursdays, 10-11 am or 7-8 pm  
February 18, 25, March 4, 11, & 18

**Free**  
Registration Required  
through the Parish Office:  
786-8105



## Stations of the Cross



During Lent, you can participate in  
Stations of the Cross  
on Fridays following the 8:00 am Mass or  
6:30 pm.

## Prayer to End Abortion

Lord God, I thank you today  
for the gift of my life,  
And for the lives of all my  
brothers and sisters.  
I know there is nothing that  
destroys more life than abortion,  
Yet I rejoice that you have conquered death  
by the Resurrection of Your Son.  
I am ready to do my part in ending abortion.

Today I commit myself  
Never to be silent,  
Never to be passive,  
Never to be forgetful of the unborn.  
I commit myself to be active  
in the pro-life movement,  
And never to stop defending life  
Until all my brothers and sisters are protected,  
And our nation once again becomes  
A nation with liberty and justice  
Not just for some,  
but for all,  
Through Christ  
our Lord.

Amen!

Rev. Frank Pavone  
PrayerCampaign.org



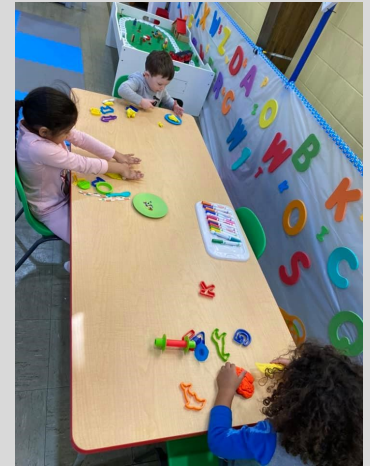
ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST PARISH

**IN THE  
BEGINNING**

PRESCHOOL  
BORN OF GOD

## WISH LIST

- Crayons
- Playdough (all colors – small containers)
- Tissues
- Washable paints
- Paint brushes (various sizes)
- Dry erase markers (various colors)
- Colored pencils
- Glue sticks
- Masking tape
- Popsicle sticks (large and small)
- Crafting construction paper



*Items can be dropped by the Parish Office.*

*Thank you for helping us grow!*

## Virtues

### **Virtue of the Week: Charity**

CCC 1822: Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. Jesus makes charity the new commandment:



*"Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another."*

*-John 13:34*

## **New Sunday Mass!**

To allow for spacing and opportunity  
to pray together, we have  
added another Mass on Sundays

This Mass is often *very lightly attended*.

**Sunday evenings 5:00 PM**

*Come and pray! Be not afraid!*



# Beloved



*St. John the Evangelist Parish is offering*  
***Beloved: A Marriage Preparation Program***

Six sessions will be covered  
in three afternoons:

**Sunday, March 14, 1-4 pm**

**Sunday, March 28, 1-4 pm**

**Sunday, April 11, 3-6 pm**

*Register through the Parish Office: 786-8105*

## **Call for Altar Servers**

Altar servers are  
welcome to serve  
once again. We  
also welcome new  
altar servers.

Contact the Parish  
Office if you are  
interested:  
786-8105.



**Share the Good News  
and be an Evangelist  
via Social Media and Live Streaming!**



*We are seeking volunteers to  
help live stream Daily and  
Sunday Masses. Equipment and  
training will be provided.*

Contact: [sje.mediagroup@gmail.com](mailto:sje.mediagroup@gmail.com)

## ***Book Corner: A Special Recommendation by Mary Talarico***



***Bringing Lent Home with Pope Francis, St.  
John Paul II, and Saint Mother Theresa***

By Donna Marie Cooper Boyle

Your friendly parish volunteer, Mary Talarico,  
suggests devotional Lenten books inspired by  
Mother Theresa, St. John Paul II, and Pope Francis.

**Copies are available for sale at the parish office  
Monday—Thursday, 9 am—3 pm, or by  
appointment, 413-786-8105.**



## **Attention All Local Crafters! Outdoor Spring Craft Fair**

**Saturday, May 1, 9 am - 5pm**  
(Rain date: Saturday, May 8)

We are seeking local crafters to join our spring craft  
fair with Mother's Day-friendly items.

**Email [sje.information@gmail.com](mailto:sje.information@gmail.com)  
and we will send you a form.**

*(Crafters only. No vendors or direct sellers please.)*





# February 17 - March 28 40 DAYS FOR LIFE®

## HELP SAVE LIVES IN WESTERN MASS.!

**You can protect mothers and children** by joining this worldwide mobilization to pray and fast for an end to abortion!

Through prayer and fasting, peaceful vigils, and community outreach, 40 Days for Life has inspired 1,000,000 volunteers!

**With God's help,** here are the proven results over 27 coordinated campaigns:

- **18,000** babies saved from abortion
- **211** abortion workers converted
- **107** abortion centers closed

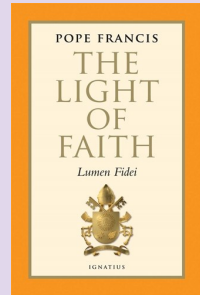
**Here's how to take part in 40 Days for Life in our community:**

- **Vigil location:** Public right-of-way outside Planned Parenthood @ 3550 Main ST., Springfield, MA 01107
- **Vigil hours:** 7 am to 7 pm daily
- **Local contact:** Diane LeDoux  
413.821.0871  
ledouxdt@gmail.com
- **Learn more...** get involved... and sign up for prayer times by visiting our campaign at the web address shown below!

[40daysforlife.com/springfield](http://40daysforlife.com/springfield)



ENCYCLICAL LETTER  
*LUMEN FIDEI*  
OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF  
**FRANCIS**  
TO THE BISHOPS PRIESTS AND DEACONS  
CONSECRATED PERSONS  
AND THE LAY FAITHFUL  
ON FAITH



CHAPTER ONE: WE HAVE BELIEVED IN LOVE (cf. 1 Jn 4:16)

**Abraham, our father in faith**

**The faith of Israel**

12. The history of the people of Israel in the Book of Exodus follows in the wake of Abraham's faith. Faith once again is born of a primordial gift: Israel trusts in God, who promises to set his people free from their misery. Faith becomes a summons to a lengthy journey leading to worship of the Lord on Sinai and the inheritance of a promised land. God's love is seen to be like that of a father who carries his child along the way (cf. *Dt* 1:31). Israel's confession of faith takes shape as an account of God's deeds in setting his people free and acting as their guide (cf. *Dt* 26:5-11), an account passed down from one generation to the next. God's light shines for Israel through the remembrance of the Lord's mighty deeds, recalled and celebrated in worship, and passed down from parents to children. Here we see how the light of faith is linked to concrete life-stories, to the grateful remembrance of God's mighty deeds and the progressive fulfilment of his promises. Gothic architecture gave clear expression to this: in the great cathedrals light comes down from heaven by passing through windows depicting the history of salvation. God's light comes to us through the account of his self-revelation, and thus becomes capable of illuminating our passage through time by recalling his gifts and demonstrating how he fulfils his promises.

13. The history of Israel also shows us the temptation of unbelief to which the people yielded more than once. Here the opposite of faith is shown to be idolatry. While Moses is speaking to God on Sinai, the people cannot bear the mystery of God's hiddenness, they cannot endure the time of waiting to see his face. Faith by its very nature demands renouncing the immediate possession which sight would appear to offer; it is an invitation to turn to the source of the light, while respecting the mystery of a countenance which will unveil itself personally in its own good time. Martin Buber once cited a definition of idolatry proposed by the rabbi of Kock: idolatry is "when a face addresses a face which is not a face". In place of faith in God, it seems better to worship an idol, into whose face we can look directly and whose origin we know, because it is the work of our own hands. Before an idol, there is no risk that we will be called to abandon our security, for idols "have mouths, but they cannot speak" (*Ps* 115:5). Idols exist, we begin to see, as a pretext for setting ourselves at the centre of reality and worshiping the work of our own hands. Once man has lost the fundamental orientation which unifies his existence, he breaks down into the multiplicity of his desires; in refusing to await the time of promise, his life-story disintegrates into a myriad of unconnected instants. Idolatry, then, is always polytheism, an aimless passing from one lord to another. Idolatry does not offer a journey but rather a plethora of paths leading nowhere and forming a vast labyrinth. Those who choose not to put their trust in God must hear the din of countless idols crying out: "Put your trust in me!" Faith, tied as it is to conversion, is the opposite of idolatry; it breaks with idols to turn to the living God in a personal encounter. Believing means entrusting oneself to a merciful love which always accepts and pardons, which sustains and directs our lives, and which shows its power by its ability to make straight the crooked lines of our history. Faith consists in the willingness to let ourselves be constantly transformed and renewed by God's call. Herein lies the paradox: by constantly turning towards the Lord, we discover a sure path which liberates us from the dissolution imposed upon us by idols.

14. In the faith of Israel we also encounter the figure of Moses, the mediator. The people may not see the face of God; it is Moses who speaks to YHWH on the mountain and then tells the others of the Lord's will. With this presence of a mediator in its midst, Israel learns to journey together in unity. The individual's act of faith finds its place within a community, within the common "we" of the people who, in faith, are like a single



person — "my first-born son", as God would describe all of Israel (cf. *Ex* 4:22). Here mediation is not an obstacle, but an opening: through our encounter with others, our gaze rises to a truth greater than ourselves. Rousseau once lamented that he could not see God for himself: "How many people stand between God and me!" ... "Is it really so simple and natural that God would have sought out Moses in order to speak to Jean Jacques Rousseau?" On the basis of an individualistic and narrow conception of knowledge one cannot appreciate the significance of mediation, this capacity to participate in the vision of another, this shared knowledge which is the knowledge proper to love. Faith is God's free gift, which calls for humility and the courage to trust and to entrust; it enables us to see the luminous path leading to the encounter of God and humanity: the history of salvation.

### The fullness of Christian faith

15. "Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad" (*Jn* 8:56). According to these words of Jesus, Abraham's faith pointed to him; in some sense it foresaw his mystery. So Saint Augustine understood it when he stated that the patriarchs were saved by faith, not faith in Christ who had come but in Christ who was yet to come, a faith pressing towards the future of Jesus. Christian faith is centred on Christ; it is the confession that Jesus is Lord and that God has raised him from the dead (cf. *Rom* 10:9). All the threads of the Old Testament converge on Christ; he becomes the definitive "Yes" to all the promises, the ultimate basis of our "Amen" to God (cf. *2 Cor* 1:20). The history of Jesus is the complete manifestation of God's reliability. If Israel continued to recall God's great acts of love, which formed the core of its confession of faith and broadened its gaze in faith, the life of Jesus now appears as the locus of God's definitive intervention, the supreme manifestation of his love for us. The word which God speaks to us in Jesus is not simply one word among many, but his eternal Word (cf. *Heb* 1:1-2). God can give no greater guarantee of his love, as Saint Paul reminds us (cf. *Rom* 8:31-39). Christian faith is thus faith in a perfect love, in its decisive power, in its ability to transform the world and to unfold its history. "We know and believe the love that God has for us" (*1 Jn* 4:16). In the love of God revealed in Jesus, faith perceives the foundation on which all reality and its final destiny rest.

16. The clearest proof of the reliability of Christ's love is to be found in his dying for our sake. If laying down one's life for one's friends is the greatest proof of love (cf. *Jn* 15:13), Jesus offered his own life for all, even for his enemies, to transform their hearts. This explains why the evangelists could see the hour of Christ's crucifixion as the culmination of the gaze of faith; in that hour the depth and breadth of God's love shone forth. It was then that Saint John offered his solemn testimony, as together with the Mother of Jesus he gazed upon the pierced one (cf. *Jn* 19:37): "He who saw this has borne witness, so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth" (*Jn* 19:35). In Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, Prince Myshkin sees a painting by Hans Holbein the Younger depicting Christ dead in the tomb and says: "Looking at that painting might cause one to lose his faith". The painting is a gruesome portrayal of the destructive effects of death on Christ's body. Yet it is precisely in contemplating Jesus' death that faith grows stronger and receives a dazzling light; then it is revealed as faith in Christ's steadfast love for us, a love capable of embracing death to bring us salvation. This love, which did not recoil before death in order to show its depth, is something I can believe in; Christ's total self-gift overcomes every suspicion and enables me to entrust myself to him completely.

