



JUST A GUY IN THE PEW
THE NARROW ROAD.
DECEMBER 2021 | VULNERABILITY

*In loving memory of Bill Platten.
A leader, a mentor, a friend.*



THE NARROW ROAD

THE EVERYDAY GUIDE FOR THE EVERYDAY GUY



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WELCOME

Brothers in Christ,

I am so excited to deliver this resource to you. As I look back over the years at what God has had us doing at Just a Guy in the Pew, it has become obvious that His goal for our ministry is to help men become virtuous. Jesus didn't ask us to be merely "good" men, no He called us to be great men. In order for this to happen we need to leave vice and selfishness behind and trade it in for virtue and selflessness. That is what will help us achieve the goal that Christ has for us all. That goal is holiness. In the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, "The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God." What is God? He is holy and that's what we should hope to become as well.

The *Catechism* defines virtue in this way: "A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions." (CCC1803) Did you catch that? It says in order to be virtuous we need a habitual and firm disposition. This is where I think most men struggle. Most of us desire to do good. We desire to BE good. The problem is we don't have a system in place to form the necessary habits that shore up our will. Almost every man I have worked with over the years falls prey to this. We have the intention of being virtuous, but the road to hell is paved with good intentions, as they say. As men, we need structure and accountability to help us practice and live out virtue in our lives. Put pieces of wood for building a desk in front of a guy without directions or tools and the wood will soon be pushed to the side with a promise of getting to it later. Put that same wood in front of a guy with directions and a screw gun and he will build it in an hour. You see, the desire is there, we just need good directions.

That is what I hope these books can be for you every month. In them, you will be able to practice a singular virtue over 30 days in the different relationships of your life. This will help you dial your focus in on one virtue each month and will help keep you from feeling overwhelmed. Feeling overwhelmed is what makes most guys put something down. That's why we have made each day as simple as possible for you. We have even included the daily Gospel reading for you to read and reflect on what God is sharing with you personally that day. That in itself will help transform your life.

You also will have the opportunity to list out the ways in which you have practiced that month's particular virtue in the four different relationships in your life. Those are your relationship with God, your relationship with your spouse, your relationship

with your children, and your relationship with your neighbor. These are the places God wants us to grow in virtue. He uses the very people He puts in front of you each day as opportunities to grow in virtue and holiness. If you are not married and do not have children use those two weeks to continue to grow your relationship with God and your neighbor while praying for your future spouse and children.

The last piece we have included is the Opportunity for Grace Chart. This is not a commitment sheet but is exactly what it is called. It's an opportunity for grace. It is a list made up of simple yet powerful practices you can begin to put into place in your life. These are opportunities you can seek out throughout the month to receive God's grace or pass it along to your family or others. Most guys beat themselves up for what they don't do. This is an opportunity to shine light on the progress you are making each week in your spiritual life. It's a chance to see the positive instead of the negative.

It is my hope and prayer that you will find this simple yet powerful tool helpful. I hope that you will use this book each day to help continue on the path to holiness. If your goal is to be the man that God created you to be, then this will get you going in the right direction. I look forward to walking this journey towards becoming virtuous men beside you.

**In Christ,
John**

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRACE

DAY	MORNING PRAYER	THE NARROW ROAD	DAILY MASS	CONFESSION	ADORATION	TIME WITH WIFE	TIME WITH KIDS	NIGHT PRAYER/ EXAMEN	SUNDAY MASS
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									

DAY	MORNING PRAYER	THE NARROW ROAD	DAILY MASS	CONFESSION	ADORATION	TIME WITH WIFE	TIME WITH KIDS	NIGHT PRAYER/ EXAMEN	SUNDAY MASS
16									
17									
18									
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31									

THE VIRTUE OF VULNERABILITY

Brothers,

I firmly believe there is not a virtue more crucial to becoming the man God created you to be than vulnerability. If you never become vulnerable with yourself, with God, and with others, then you will never be able to get past the things in your life that are holding you back. Each time you try and advance down that narrow road the devil will be waiting for you, standing at the ready, to accuse you of all your sins, mistakes, and failures. He will constantly tell you that you are never good enough for God and you never will be. He is, as Scripture calls him, “the father of lies” and the “accuser of our brothers.” If we allow him, the devil uses our past to keep us from realizing the future God wants for us.

Brothers, it doesn’t have to be this way. You have a weapon to use to fight back. That weapon is the virtue of vulnerability. The problem is that many men won’t allow themselves to be vulnerable because they have bought into the world’s definition of vulnerability. The world tells a man that being vulnerable means being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally. The world also tells you that being vulnerable means you are weak, pitiful, and less masculine. This couldn’t be further from the truth. The world, the flesh, and the devil don’t want you to become vulnerable because they know that once you do, they are going to be on the road to losing the grip they have over you. The devil fears that once you become vulnerable, he will no longer have power over you.

I have experienced this firsthand through the sharing of my own testimony in our apostolate. For many years, I was afraid to share my story. I was afraid I would lose everything and everyone in my life if they knew the truth about the person I was. I eventually wound up in an actual jail cell in my life, but for so many years I had been living in a virtual prison cell of my own mistakes, sins, failures, and fears. Each time I attempted to open the door of the virtual cell of my life, the devil met me there to remind me of all the things I had done wrong. He convinced me that if I walked out the door I would find nothing but torture, pain, loss, and embarrassment. So, like many men, I closed the door to that cell. I bought into every lie the devil spun and returned to the comfort of my cell. Each time he showed up to push on the wounds of my sins I willingly returned to my imprisonment.

With the practice of vulnerability, I finally found the strength to escape. I realized, like St. Paul, that “when I am weak, I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:10). I figured out that when I become vulnerable, I humble myself before the Lord and realize how much I need Him. It is through His strength that we can change and become the men we are called to be.

I realize becoming vulnerable is hard. I know it is scary, but so is staying in that place in your life. God has amazing plans for you. What waits outside of that virtual cell you have been living in isn't pain and loss. Outside is mercy, joy, and peace. You just have to trust in God, become vulnerable, and watch as everything you have been so afraid of becomes exposed as nothing more than lies from the evil one.

Brothers, the time is now. Whatever it is you are dealing with needs to be admitted. Whatever lies you believe about yourself need to be cast out into the light and love of Jesus Christ. If you are tired of living in that cell, use the key Jesus has provided you in the virtue of vulnerability. Take courage, become vulnerable, and get ready for a new life in Jesus Christ.

**In Christ,
John**

VIRTUE PLAN FOR THE MONTH

VIRTUE: VULNERABILITY

MOTTO:

"Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong."
(2 Corinthians 12:10)

ROOT SINS:

Pride, Fear

WHERE DO I SEE THESE SINS IN MY LIFE?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

PLAN TO FORM COURAGE

WEEK 1: Vulnerability and God

WEEK 2: Vulnerability and My Wife

WEEK 3: Vulnerability and My Children

WEEK 4: Vulnerability and My Neighbor

PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

Father, I have sinned and made many mistakes in my life. I know that I am broken and in need of Your mercy. Help me to have the courage to come to grips with my mistakes, my failures, and the things in my life that aren't pleasing to You. Give me the strength to become vulnerable with myself, with You my God, and with others. Allow me to cast off the lies of the devil so that I can live in the truth of your love for me. Lord, please give me the grace to learn and live out the virtue of vulnerability now and for the rest of the days of my life. **Amen.**

WEEK 1 REFLECTION:

VULNERABILITY AND GOD

The Latin root of the word vulnerability is *vulnus*. It literally means “wound.” Becoming vulnerable means that you are exposing your wounds. This is not where many men want to be. In fact, we are taught to cover up our wounds from an early age. Many men my age and older were taught by our fathers or other men in our life to put our heads down, never complain, certainly don’t have emotions or feelings about anything, and don’t ask for help because that would mean you were less of a man. Is it any wonder that so many men end up isolated and alone? Is it surprising that so many men wind up in the throes of drug addiction, alcoholism, and the lure of pornography? This is the reason that so many men walk through life like a one-man army.

We are going to deal with our wounds in some form or fashion. It just comes down to whether we choose to self-medicate with the wrong things or whether we expose our wounds to the only one who can truly heal us. Our healer is Jesus Christ. If we want to get past the things in our life that are holding us back and contributing to us being something other than who we are supposed to be, then we need to trust in the Divine Healer. Jesus is the only one who can truly fix us. He can heal the things that we can’t. We must be willing to rip off the Band Aid so He can get to it. We do that by admitting we have a sin or an issue that we can’t overcome alone, and we need Him to help us.

We see Peter do this very thing in the Gospels. Jesus has just finished preaching to the people and asks Simon Peter to put out in the deep water and lower his nets for a catch. Peter argues and complains of being tired from working all night. After finally giving in to Jesus’ request, he catches so many fish that his nets begin to tear. He then falls to his knees at the feet of Jesus and says, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” (Luke 5:8) You see, once Peter submitted to Jesus’ request, he understood that the Lord could do something for him that he could not do for himself. At that moment he became vulnerable and admitted to Jesus that he was a sinful man. This is the key to beginning a new life.

We also have an opportunity to admit our sinfulness and mistakes at the feet of Jesus. We have the gift of the sacrament of Confession. Unfortunately, many of us are afraid to go to Confession. It’s like we are afraid God is going to find out about the mistakes we have made. I have news for you! He already knows! He knew you were going to make them before He loved you into existence! He was there when they happened and now He waits for you to admit them and move past them in the confessional. St. John Paul II says, “We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures. We are the sum of our Father’s love for us.” This is what we come to understand when we become vulnerable with Jesus. God is not some domineering, angry, punishing Father. He is a loving Father that wants nothing more for you than to realize this so you will open up about your struggles and come home to Him. This is what vulnerability and God is all about. My brothers, this week, get to confession and open up to God about your issues. Be vulnerable with Him and let Him begin to heal those wounds. I promise you won’t be sorry you did.

WEEK 1: VULNERABILITY AND GOD

DECEMBER 1, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"In my deepest wound I saw your glory and it dazzled me."

— St. Augustine of Hippo

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 15:29-37

And Jesus went on from there and passed along the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain, and sat down there. And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the dumb, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, so that the throng wondered, when they saw the dumb speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." And the disciples said to him, "Where are we to get bread enough in the desert to feed so great a crowd?" And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves have you?" They said, "Seven, and a few small fish." And commanding the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied; and they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over.

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO ME IN THIS GOSPEL?

ACTS OF VULNERABILITY

HOW HAVE I SHOWN MY VULNERABILITY TO GOD TODAY?

WEEK 1: VULNERABILITY AND GOD

DECEMBER 2, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures. We are the sum of our Father's love for us."

— Pope St. John Paul II

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 7:21, 24-27

"Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

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HOW HAVE I SHOWN MY VULNERABILITY TO GOD TODAY?

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WEEK 1: VULNERABILITY AND GOD

DECEMBER 3, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"Speak to them of the great mercy of God...Sometimes people are helped by your telling of your own lamentable past."

— St. Francis Xavier

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 9:27-31

MEMORIAL OF SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER, PRIEST

And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly charged them, "See that no one knows it." But they went away and spread his fame through all that district.

[illegible]

HOW HAVE I SHOWN MY VULNERABILITY TO GOD TODAY?

WEEK 1: VULNERABILITY AND GOD

DECEMBER 4, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"The devil may try to use the hurts of life, and sometimes our own mistakes to make you feel it is impossible that Jesus really loves you, is really cleaving to you. This is a danger for all of us, and so sad, because it is completely the opposite of what Jesus is really wanting, waiting to tell you...he loves you always, even when you don't feel worthy."

— St. Teresa of Calcutta

SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 9:35–10:1, 5A, 6-8

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity. These twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And preach as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying, give without pay.

[illegible]

HOW HAVE I SHOWN MY VULNERABILITY TO GOD TODAY?

WEEK 1: VULNERABILITY AND GOD

DECEMBER 5, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken."

— C.S. Lewis

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 3:1-6

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness; and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

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HOW HAVE I SHOWN MY VULNERABILITY TO GOD TODAY?

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WEEK 1: VULNERABILITY AND GOD

DECEMBER 6, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

— 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 5:17-26

On one of those days, as he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. And behold, men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they sought to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home." And immediately he rose before them, and took up that on which he lay, and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today."

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HOW HAVE I SHOWN MY VULNERABILITY TO GOD TODAY?

WEEK 1: VULNERABILITY AND GOD

DECEMBER 7, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"You must humble yourself before everyone and consider yourself the worst of all. If we have not committed the sins that others have, perhaps this is because we did not have the opportunity - the situation and circumstances were different. In each person there is something good and something bad; we usually see only the vices in people and we see nothing that is good."

— St. Ambrose

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 18:12-14

MEMORIAL OF SAINT AMBROSE, BISHOP AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So, it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

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HOW HAVE I SHOWN MY VULNERABILITY TO GOD TODAY?

WEEK 2 REFLECTION:

VULNERABILITY AND MY WIFE

**If you are not married and do not have children, use this week to continue to grow your relationship with God and your neighbor while praying for your future spouse and children.*

A place where men find it challenging to be vulnerable is in their relationship with their wives. Again, this is an area where men are taught to keep things to themselves. After all, we are men, and we are supposed to be able to handle all the things life throws at us. There is no need to worry our wives by involving them in a difficulty we may be facing. Nope, we got ourselves into the situation, and we can get ourselves out. Does this sound familiar? I bet it does.

If we aren't careful, our hesitancy to become vulnerable with our wives can prove problematic in our marriages. Our wives understand more than anyone that we are not perfect. In fact, if you have been married for any amount of time, then your spouse is most likely well-versed in your imperfections. For some reason though, as men, we like to think our spouses are not privy to that information and so we are determined to fortify the facade that we are always okay. So, we spend our time hiding our struggles and issues from the person who is supposed to be our closest ally.

So much of this has to do with our pride. We are men and because of that we are supposed to be able to handle anything life throws our way. That's the tune we can sometimes hear in our heads. It can feel as if your father or other men in your life are standing there waiting to pull your man card if you show any signs of needing assistance in your life. I know the feeling. I spent many years of my marriage telling myself I didn't need anybody or anything and that I could find my own way out of the addictions I found myself lost in. I convinced myself that my struggles were my problem, and it was my sole responsibility to figure them out. I feared Angela would leave me and I would lose everything if I shared any of my issues. I never really entertained the fact that she might actually want to walk with me through them and come out on the other side with me. Instead, I continued to believe the lies and fear mongering of the devil in this relationship, much like I did in my relationship with God.

I couldn't have been more wrong about Angela. I was arrested and instead of divorcing me, she stayed by my side. I can't even imagine the anger, the hurt, and the embarrassment all of it must have caused her. Despite all of that, she stood there by my side. She took her vows seriously as I imagine most of your wives do, too. Because of her love, I now understand what C. S. Lewis meant when he said, "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken." When we become vulnerable with our wives, we become the partners they deserve. We love in the way that we were always meant to. "The two become one flesh" means more than just sexual intimacy. It means truly sharing your whole life with each other: the good times and the joys, along with the struggles and the heartaches.

The next time you find yourself "manning up" and keeping your struggles from your wife, I want you to think of these questions. Would you want her to feel like she couldn't come to you for help? Would you want her to hide and bury her struggles

in lies or addictions? Would you want her to feel like she had to go through everything herself? I imagine you wouldn't. She wouldn't want you to do that either. This week, I want each and every one of you to really practice opening up to your wife more. I want you to cast aside all of the macho stuff you have been told and be honest with your spouse about things in your life and in your relationship. Let her into every part of you and start to experience the marriage you both have always hoped for. Pray for me to do the same, brothers.

WEEK 2: VULNERABILITY AND MY WIFE

DECEMBER 8, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"Let us run to Mary, and, as her little children, cast ourselves into her arms with a perfect confidence."

— St. Francis de Sales

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 1:26-38

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

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HOW HAVE I SHOWN VULNERABILITY IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY WIFE TODAY?

WEEK 2: VULNERABILITY AND MY WIFE

DECEMBER 9, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway."

— St. Teresa of Calcutta



SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 11:11-15

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Eli'jah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

[illegible]

HOW HAVE I SHOWN VULNERABILITY IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY WIFE TODAY?

WEEK 2: VULNERABILITY AND MY WIFE

DECEMBER 10, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"We don't want to think about our weaknesses. We don't want to talk about them, and we certainly don't want anyone else to point them out. This is a classic sign of mediocrity, and this mediocrity has a firm grip on the Church and humanity at this moment in history."

— Matthew Kelly

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 11:16-19

"But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places and calling to their playmates, 'We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO ME IN THIS GOSPEL?

ACTS OF VULNERABILITY

HOW HAVE I SHOWN VULNERABILITY IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY WIFE TODAY?

WEEK 2: VULNERABILITY AND MY WIFE

DECEMBER 11, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love."

— St. Teresa of Calcutta

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 17:9A, 10-13

And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead." And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Eli'jah must come?" He replied, "Eli'jah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Eli'jah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

[illegible]

HOW HAVE I SHOWN VULNERABILITY IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY WIFE TODAY?

WEEK 2: VULNERABILITY AND MY WIFE

DECEMBER 12, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"This is the very perfection of a man, to find out his own imperfections."

— St. Augustine of Hippo

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 3:10-18

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

And the multitudes asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than is appointed you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages." As the people were in expectation, and all men questioned in their hearts concerning John, whether perhaps he were the Christ, John answered them all, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people.

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HOW HAVE I SHOWN VULNERABILITY IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY WIFE TODAY?

WEEK 2: VULNERABILITY AND MY WIFE

DECEMBER 13, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"Let not weakness make you discouraged."

— St. Mary MacKillop

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 21:23-27

MEMORIAL OF SAINT LUCY, VIRGIN AND MARTYR

And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you a question; and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven or from men?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we are afraid of the multitude; for all hold that John was a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

[illegible]

HOW HAVE I SHOWN VULNERABILITY IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY WIFE TODAY?

WEEK 2: VULNERABILITY AND MY WIFE

DECEMBER 14, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"To be taken with love for a soul, God does not look on its greatness, but the greatness of its humility."

— St. John of the Cross

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 21:28-32

MEMORIAL OF SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS, PRIEST AND DOCTOR
OF THE CHURCH

"What do you think? A man had two sons; and he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he repented and went. And he went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the harlots believed him; and even when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him."

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO ME IN THIS GOSPEL?

ACTS OF VULNERABILITY

HOW HAVE I SHOWN VULNERABILITY IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY WIFE TODAY?

WEEK 3 REFLECTION:

VULNERABILITY AND MY CHILDREN

**If you are not married and do not have children, use this week to continue to grow your relationship with God and your neighbor while praying for your future spouse and children.*

Whenever I share my testimony on the road at an event or to an individual, there is always one question that comes up every time. Inevitably someone always asks, "Do your children know about your drug issues, and do they know you went to jail?" I find it funny that out of all the questions people will ask, this one is one of the most frequent. It is almost as if people are asking for permission to share their own story of brokenness with their kids. It is like they want someone to tell them it is ok for them to be truthful and honest with their children. The answer is yes. I have told them everything. They know about the drug and alcohol abuse. They know their daddy went to jail. They know their daddy made some really big mistakes. They understand their father was not living the life he was called to as a disciple. Most importantly, they know that God has forgiven their father and will do the same for them when they make mistakes. If our children don't understand this, then they are going to be headed down a tough road where they don't understand who they are nor who God is.

In Matthew 9:14 Jesus says to his disciples, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." He said this because people were bringing their children to Him so He could lay his hands on them and pray over them, but His disciples were hindering them. The children were not a bother to Jesus. He had nothing to hide from them. They knew who He was and he made no attempt to hide it. He was vulnerable and inviting to them. That is the way we must be with our kids. Our kids need to see we are not perfect robots who cruise through life without issues or struggles. They need to realize that we have had problems and that they will in their lives, too. What good does it do for children to grow up thinking the world is all sunshine and rainbows? If we become vulnerable with them and live the truth of our lives no matter how broken the truth of our lives may have been, then we are preparing them for their own journey.

We all know how hard it can be as men to be vulnerable with anyone. It can be especially difficult to be vulnerable with our kids because of the struggle we feel in maintaining whatever heroic or positive image they have of us. The thing is, though, I don't want my children thinking they have to go through life suppressing their struggles and issues the way I did. I don't want them covering up their wounds. Instead, I want them to understand they can come to their mom and dad with anything. I want them to know they will need other people in life to share their burdens with. For them to understand that, we have to model vulnerability to them. Through our own courage in sharing things with them, (when they are age-appropriate for some of those life lessons) we give them permission to be brave. We show them it is okay to admit when you have made wrong choices and that the Father's love and mercy is always there for them. They see it is okay to need other people and to be a person who is there for someone else in need.

In the words of St. John Bosco, "It's not enough to love the children, it is necessary that they are aware that they are loved." We show them just how loved they are when

we become vulnerable with them and give them permission to do the same. This week, focus on modeling vulnerability to your children. It will be one of the greatest gifts you give them.

WEEK 3: VULNERABILITY AND MY CHILDREN

DECEMBER 15, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"Lay all your cares about the future trustingly in God's hands and let yourself be guided by the Lord just like a little child."

— St. Edith Stein

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 7:18B-23

The disciples of John told him of all these things. And John, calling to him two of his disciples, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" In that hour he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offense at me."

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WEEK 3: VULNERABILITY AND MY CHILDREN

DECEMBER 16, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

“Father, I am seeking: I am hesitant and uncertain, but will you, O God, watch over each step of mine and guide me.”

— **St. Augustine of Hippo**

 **SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY**

GOSPEL

LK 7:24-30

When the messengers of John had gone, he began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings’ courts. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.’ I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” (When they heard this all the people and the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John; but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

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WEEK 3: VULNERABILITY AND MY CHILDREN

DECEMBER 17, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

“One who makes no mistakes, makes nothing.”

— St. Teresa of Avila

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 1:1-17

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

[illegible]

WEEK 3: VULNERABILITY AND MY CHILDREN

DECEMBER 18, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"It's not enough to love the children, it is necessary that they are aware that they are loved."

— St. John Bosco

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

[illegible]

HOW HAVE I SHOWN VULNERABILITY IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY CHILDREN TODAY?

WEEK 3: VULNERABILITY AND MY CHILDREN

DECEMBER 19, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt."

— Luke 6:27-29

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 1:39-45

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

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WEEK 3: VULNERABILITY AND MY CHILDREN

DECEMBER 20, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

“When I shrink from suffering, Jesus reproves me and tells me that He did not refuse to suffer. Then I say ‘Jesus, Your will and not mine’. At last, I am convinced that only God can make me happy, and in Him I have placed all my hope...”

— St. Gemma Galgani

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 1:26-38

There In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

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HOW HAVE I SHOWN VULNERABILITY IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY CHILDREN TODAY?

WEEK 3: VULNERABILITY AND MY CHILDREN

DECEMBER 21, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community."

— Dorothy Day

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 1:39-45

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! and why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

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WEEK 4 REFLECTION:

VULNERABILITY AND MY NEIGHBOR

If we are going to make it through the journey of this world and become the men God created us to be along the way, then we are going to need help. Contrary to popular belief, men were not made to go it alone. We aren't supposed to be lone wolves or a one-man army. That is a lie of the world. By living with that mentality, we play right into Satan's hands. He wants you to be isolated. You are more prone to sin and vice when you choose to go it alone. 1 Peter 5:8 tells us that "our opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for [someone] to devour." Packs of lions chase a herd of prey in hopes they can eventually isolate one of the animals. Their goal is to make one of them break from the pack so they can easily overcome it. The devil uses the same tactic. He accuses us of our sin and lies to us about our worth to God so we turn away from Him. He convinces you that you are the only person in the world that struggles with pornography, alcoholism, drugs, anger, or any other sin you may have committed, all so you will isolate yourself from others. That is why it is so crucial to learn the virtue of vulnerability and practice it in our relationships with other men.

When we become vulnerable with a group of trusted brothers, we begin to open our eyes to the fact that we are not alone. We start to realize the devil has been lying to us all along. There are other men who struggle and need help dealing with the same things you struggle with. When men understand and practice strength in vulnerability, the lies of the devil begin to crumble. We begin to understand that we are not supposed to just put our heads down and carry the burdens of our lives alone. When men share their lives with one another, they take their lives back. The fears that kept them in a virtual prison cell of their own sins, faults, mistakes, and failures begin to withdraw. Now, when the devil comes to accuse and poke at the wounds they once were hiding, he finds that those very wounds have been healed. He realizes he no longer has power over them.

We as men have a weapon with which to fight him. That weapon is each other. After all, Scripture tells us that iron sharpens iron (Prov 27:17) The first apostles knew this. The New Testament is full of verses from the apostles that lead us to the need for becoming vulnerable with our brothers. James tells us "Therefore confess your sins to your one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." (James 5:16) Paul tells us in Galatians 6:2 "Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ." In 1 Thessalonians 5:1, Paul tells us to "encourage one another and build one another up." Finally, John the Beloved tells us that "if we talk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

To become vulnerable literally means you are choosing to leave the darkness of the prison of your sin and isolation to walk in the light. It is the chance that most have us have been looking for all of our lives. You cannot escape that cell alone and neither can your brothers. This is why it is so important to find men in your life to become truly vulnerable with. Cast off the lies that sharing your emotions and your feelings

make you less of a man. Rebuke the falsehood that you are weak for admitting you need help. It is in the realization that we can't go it alone that we become truly strong. God showed this to St. Paul. That is why St. Paul calls out to us saying, "therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints for the sake of Christ, for when I am weak, I am strong." (2 Cor 12:10) My brothers, find men in your life to share with. Start a small group of your brothers in your parish. (We can help!) Open up your lives fully to your brothers and find the peace and joy that comes with casting off the lies of the devil for the truth of Christ.

WEEK 4: VULNERABILITY AND MY NEIGHBOR

DECEMBER 22, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"We must love them both, those whose opinions we share and those whose opinions we reject. For both have labored in the search for truth and both have helped us in the finding of it."

— St. Thomas Aquinas

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 1:46-56

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever." And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

[illegible]

WEEK 4: VULNERABILITY AND MY NEIGHBOR

DECEMBER 23, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"Jesus is with you even when you don't feel His presence. He is never so close to you as He is during your spiritual battles. He is always there, close to you, encouraging you to fight your battle courageously. He is there to ward off the enemy's blows so that you may not be hurt."

— St. Pio da Pietrelcina



SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 1:57-66

Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son. And her neighbors and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your kindred is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." And they all marveled. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.

[illegible]

WEEK 4: VULNERABILITY AND MY NEIGHBOR

DECEMBER 24, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

“Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.”

— James 5:16

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 1:67-79

And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us from the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

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WEEK 4: VULNERABILITY AND MY NEIGHBOR

DECEMBER 25, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

— Galatians 6:2

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 2:1-14

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (CHRISTMAS)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirini-us was governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in that region, there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!"

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WEEK 4: VULNERABILITY AND MY NEIGHBOR

DECEMBER 26, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"You must humble yourself before everyone and consider yourself the worst of all. If we have not committed the sins that others have, perhaps this is because we did not have the opportunity - the situation and circumstances were different. In each person there is something good and something bad; we usually see only the vices in people and we see nothing that is good."

— St. Ambrose

SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 2:41-52

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously." And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.

[illegible]

WEEK 4: VULNERABILITY AND MY NEIGHBOR

DECEMBER 27, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"The road is narrow. He who wishes to travel it more easily must cast off all things and use the Cross as his cane."

— St. John of the Cross

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

JN 20:1A AND 2-8

FEAST OF SAINT JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed.

[illegible]

WEEK 4: VULNERABILITY AND MY NEIGHBOR

DECEMBER 28, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"He gave our pain and struggles a holy significance, a redemptive power, which makes it a privilege for us to suffer with Christ."

— Scott Hahn

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

MT 2:13-18
FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS, MARTYRS

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more."

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

HOW HAVE I SHOWN VULNERABILITY IN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY NEIGHBOR TODAY?

WEEK 4: VULNERABILITY AND MY NEIGHBOR

DECEMBER 29, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"Calamities unmask our shared vulnerability and expose those false, superfluous securities around which we had organized our plans, routines, and priorities. They reveal our neglect of what nourishes and strengthens the life of the community, how we had shriveled within our bubbles of indifference and well-being."

— Pope Francis

SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 2:22-35

And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel." And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

[illegible]

WEEK 4: VULNERABILITY AND MY NEIGHBOR

DECEMBER 30, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

"You must ask God to give you power to fight against the sin of pride which is your greatest enemy – the root of all that is evil, and the failure of all that is good. For God resists the proud."

— St. Vincent de Paul

 SAY THE PRAYER FOR VULNERABILITY

GOSPEL

LK 2:36-40

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanu-el, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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WEEK 4: VULNERABILITY AND MY NEIGHBOR

DECEMBER 31, 2021

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHURCH

“Trials and tribulations offer us a chance to make reparation for our past faults and sins. On such occasions the Lord comes to us like a physician to heal the wounds left by our sins. Tribulation is the divine medicine.”

— St. Augustine of Hippo



GOSPEL

JN 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light. The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John bore witness to him, and cried, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.’”) And from his fulness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

[illegible][illegible]

LITANY OF HUMILITY

O Jesus! meek and humble of heart,
Hear me.

From the desire of being esteemed,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being loved,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being extolled,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being honored ,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being praised,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being preferred
to others,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being consulted,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the desire of being approved,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being humiliated,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being despised,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of suffering rebukes,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being calumniated,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being forgotten,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being ridiculed,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being wronged,
Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being suspected,
Deliver me, Jesus.

That others may be loved more than I,
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be esteemed more than I,
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That, in the opinion of the world, others
may increase and I may decrease,
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be chosen and I set aside,
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be praised and
I unnoticed,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be preferred to me
in everything,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may become holier than I,
provided that I may become as holy as
I should,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

THE LITANY OF TRUST

From the belief that I have to earn
Your love,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear that I am unlovable,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the false security that I have what
it takes,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear that trusting You will leave
me more destitute,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From all suspicion of Your words
and promises,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the rebellion against childlike
dependency on You,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From refusals and reluctances in
accepting Your will,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From anxiety about the future,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From resentment or excessive
preoccupation with the past,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From restless self-seeking
in the present moment,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From disbelief in Your love and presence,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being asked to give
more than I have,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the belief that my life has no
meaning or worth,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of what love demands,

Deliver me, Jesus.

From discouragement,

Deliver me, Jesus.

That You are continually holding me
sustaining me, loving me,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That Your love goes deeper than my sins
and failings, and transforms me,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That not knowing what tomorrow brings is
an invitation to lean on You,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That you are with me in my suffering,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That my suffering, united to Your own, will
bear fruit in this life and the next,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That You will not leave me orphan, that You
are present in Your Church,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That Your plan is better than anything else,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That You always hear me and in Your
goodness always respond to me,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That You give me the grace to accept
forgiveness and to forgive others,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That You give me all the strength I need for
what is asked,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That my life is a gift,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That You will teach me to trust You,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That You are my Lord and my God,

Jesus, I trust in you.

That I am Your beloved one,

Jesus, I trust in you.

PRAYER TO SAINT JOSEPH

To you, O blessed Joseph, do we come in our tribulation, and having implored the help of your most holy Spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also. Through that charity which bound you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God and through the paternal love with which you embraced the Child Jesus, we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ has purchased by His Blood, and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities. O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ; O most loving father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence; O our most mighty protector, be kind to us and from heaven assist us in our struggle with the power of darkness. As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril, so now protect God's Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity; shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection, so that, supported by your example and your aid, we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness, and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven. **Amen.**



JUST A GUY
IN THE PEW