

# Faith + Culture

## Side with the Advocate

Your sins and failures don't reveal who you are. God's Word does. When that deflating voice in your head starts speaking up, recognize where it's coming from. It's not God.

Learn to listen to the one sacred scripture calls "the Advocate"—the Holy Spirit. He speaks in the quiet of your soul.

The next time you start thinking, "I am weak. I am defeated. I am at the end of the line. I am unattractive. I am fat. I am unlovable," think instead, "I am blessed. I am beautiful. I am chosen. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I am more than a conqueror, and even in the hour of trial, GOD will never leave me or

forsake me. I am beloved. I am fearfully and wonderfully made!"

That is what God thinks about you. Those are the words the Holy Spirit whispers into your soul. Listen to Him.

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Chris Stefanick  
Real Life Catholic

## Bulletin insert, first edition



Fr. Keith Streifel  
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"Read all about it!" and "Hear ye! Hear ye!" come to mind when I think of a first edition. The first public message of Jesus also comes to mind. "Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand!" were the message of Jesus and the apostles as they went out to the towns.

That first part doesn't really sound like good news, and isn't it a bit rude for Jesus to walk into a place and tell people to repent? I mean, how does he know that I need to

repent? Who does he think he is?! On the other hand, even if Jesus weren't God and couldn't know our hearts by divine power, no observer of humanity would be surprised by Jesus calling a spade a spade. Jesus can be confident in his declaration because he knows that sin and its effects reach every one of our hearts. I may try to wheedle my way out of my sins by justifying them, or telling people that I am weak. I may try to minimize my sins by comparing them to the grave sins of others. But if I try to deny that I have sinned, I will need to cross my fingers and try to avoid anyone who knows me. The fact of my sin, or of anybody's sin, is not really news, let alone good news.

The Good News is not the first part. Repentance becomes good news only in the second sentence: "The Kingdom of God is at hand!" This means that the King has come, that the one who can do

something with our sorrow for sin has brought the remedy for our sin. People are sorry for their weakness, foibles, and failings because they realized that these things hurt them and hurt those around them. But it's even more frustrating if there is no way to overcome them.

The Good News is that Jesus is here and has come not to condemn, but to give life. Sin needs healing. Repentance seeks forgiveness. And the one who can forgive has come! Not only that, from our vantage point, we can see how that forgiveness came from the Cross, and how the Sacraments make his forgiveness available personally to us.

This was the first edition of Jesus's ministry. As you read the first edition of this bulletin insert, I hope that you will find it engaging, useful, and inspiring. More, I hope that we never lose touch with the Good News found in Jesus's first edition.

## Life is not yours to keep



Deacon Kris Ringwall  
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How many times have you ever borrowed something, only to wish you could keep it? Perhaps you borrowed a tool or even a car that was nicer than anything you own. The time I borrowed a top of the line Cadillac from a Fargo car dealer to drive the governor around during the NDSU Little International comes to mind. I drove a couple extra trips around the block, just to enjoy what I did not have.

Life seems to be divided up, and as we often hear, between the wants list and the needs list. The wants are always there, but it is the needs list, that keeps the wants list seldom looked at. But in the end, even items on the needs list may be debated in the big picture.

Some time ago, I was reminded, not in any

large way, but still reminded, that life is a gift, a gift from God, but not mine to keep. Perhaps the most precious gift of all, the mere presence of life can never be under stated, and yet, no matter who, always temporary.

Being half a centurion, the annual checkup was slightly more detailed, a little more probing should I say. All things totaled, at least I'm still alive, kicking and going strong, but the file notation is still there, "Life is not yours to keep." I am hopeful the package I was dealt will hold together for another half a century, but humbled that God would even loan me such a life for even a little while.

As Saint Paul notes in his letter to the Colossians, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his Body, which is the Church ..." (Colossians 1:24) As members of the Church, we are all called to the glory of the resurrection and the final day, but also share in the human suffering that Christ endured for our salvation. In our daily tasks, so often the wants creep ahead, slowly, maybe even occasionally off setting a need. Can I set Christ aside this weekend? After all, I have waited all

year for this trip.

God gave me this body, but the surgeon says a few improvements would be simple. Can life exist, in a pure state of perfection? Life needs to be celebrated through Christ's message of love and forgiveness, a life shared with Christ and lived through Christ's passion. There is nothing we can do to Christ's suffering for the atonement of our sins, but the summation of all our suffering for the Church will continue to suppress evil in the world today, and in the end, when all evil succumbs to Christ, so God will welcome us to heaven.

Suffering is so evident in the world today. Close and afar, each with our own cross, but when joined with the cross of Jesus, we are walking the path for the good of all. The list is long, but how I marvel at Ketti, our youngest, who holds her head so high, despite the heavy toll. Suffering yes, but life, a big "Yes." Yes, life is not for us to keep, only to live, to share with all those around us. Our presence will not be for long, at least for now, but each of our suffering, when placed with Christ's will lower the door on evil, and bring glory to God.

May you find the Peace of Christ.