

2024

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

*In Honor of the 200th Anniversary of the
Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours*



Bon Secours

Associates, Sisters of Bon Secours

2024 LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

This daily devotional for the Lenten season into Easter is gratefully offered by the Bon Secours Associates and Coworkers in the Bon Secours Family in commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the founding of The Congregation of Bon Secours.

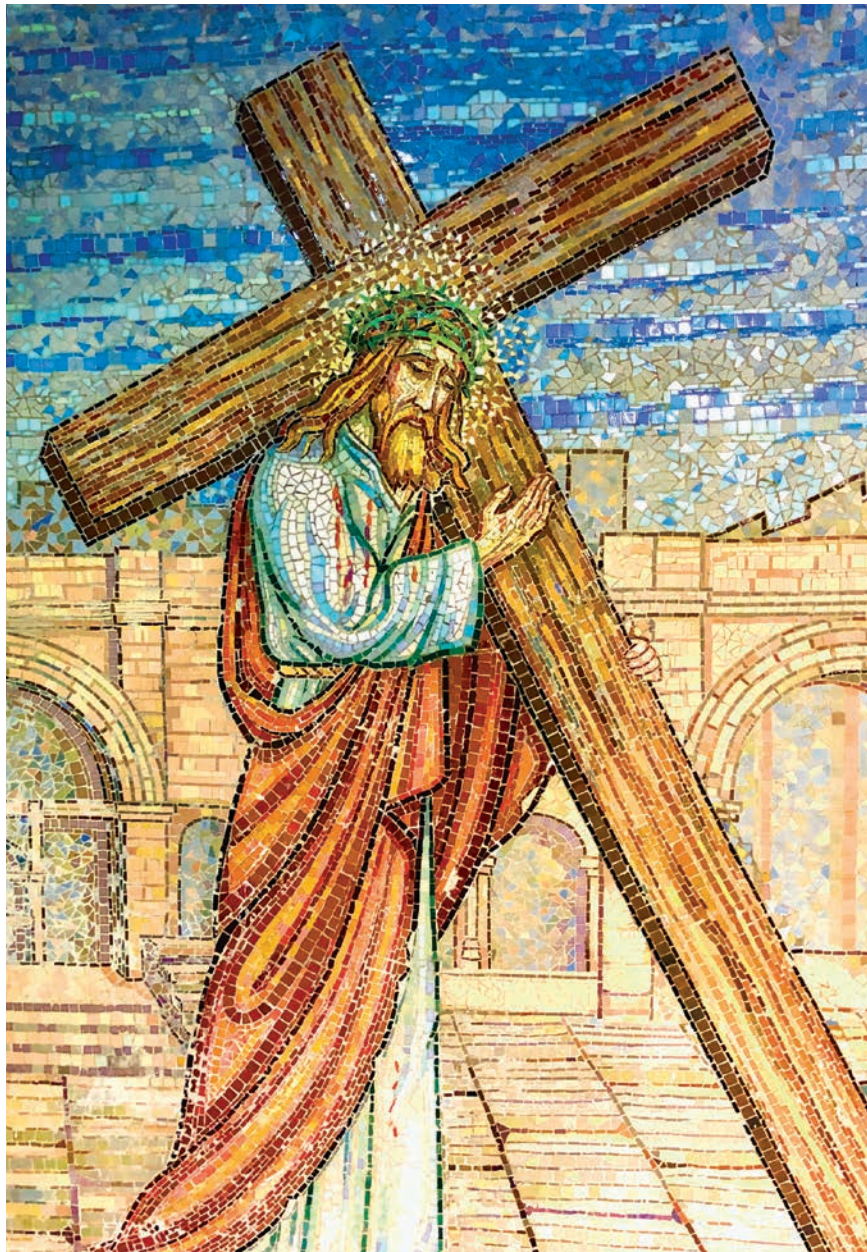


Each year is a year of grace, and the Lenten season an especially rich time in the year for Christian renewal, reflection and recommitment to the life of discipleship. For the Sisters of Bon Secours and the Bon Secours Family, 2024 is a special year of grace, as the community celebrates two centuries of life as an apostolic congregation of the Catholic Church. It is also a notable year in that the Sisters will hold their Chapter in Paris on this 200th anniversary, with the theme *Hearts Aflame*. One could not possibly fathom every person, family, or community that has been touched by the Sisters and their coworkers through the past 200 years in their ministry of compassion, healing and liberation. Each act of healing love stands as a testament to faithful service done in Christ's name on behalf of the poorest of the poor and disenfranchised, the ill, the dying, and those from many walks of life in need of the simple, but powerful, presence of a caring other. Presence heals. We hope the prayerful presence in this devotional of the diverse companions of the Sisters of Bon Secours will inspire your spirit this Lent and set your heart aflame. We hope it will gently expand your awareness of the closeness of the ever-present Christ, who came among us to show the human family the face of God, the Father. We are grateful to have been called into the ministry of Bon Secours and to share with you our reflections on each day's Lenten scriptures, into the Easter season where we once again proclaim, "He is Risen, He is Risen, indeed!"

Many blessings to you, the reader, in this holy season,

Amy S. Kulesa
Director, Bon Secours Associates, USA





List of Reflections

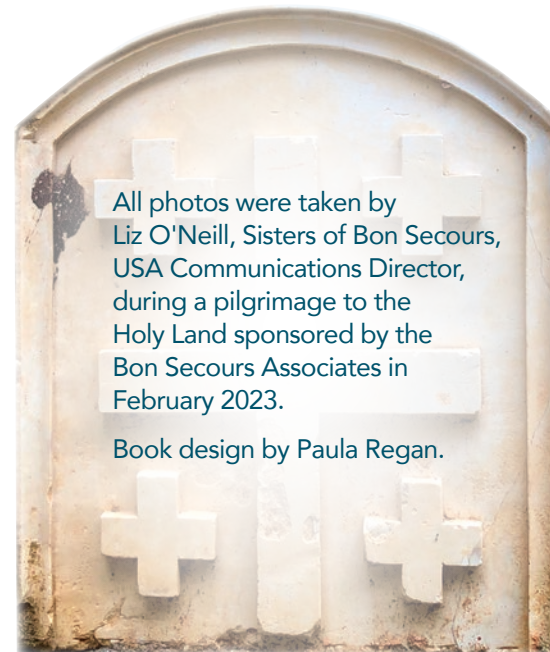
An Abundance of Love	36
Alarmed! Amazed! Alleluia?	64
Betrayal and Forgiveness	58
The Bronze Snake	50
But Jesus Went to the Mount of Olives	48
A Call to Trust In God and Not in Human Beings	27
Choose Life!	10
The Death of Lazarus	47
Everything I have is Yours	29
Excessive Grace	33
Fruit of the Soul	17
God Answers Prayer Generously	18
God is For Us	22
God Opens the Servant's Ear and Gives Him Words to Share	59
God's Plan	28
God's Way of Doing Things	23
The Healing at the Pool	41
Invited to Love All Perfectly	60
I Will Rejoice in Jerusalem and Exult in my People	40
Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King	56
Looking Inward and Out	25
The Lord's Word is Truth	44
Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin	12
Loving Like Jesus	21
May My Heart be a Temple of the Holy Spirit	30
The Meaning of Forgiveness	19
A New Dwelling Place	54
New Eyes	45
Our Light	39
Paul's Plea to the Corinthians	9
People's Division Over Jesus	46
Remember, and Trust	63
Remembering Our Source	24
Restoration of Compassion Through Community	42
The Resurrection Changes Everything	66
Ritual Versus Sacrifice	11
Sheep and Goats?	15
The Silent Space Between	52

Stepping into the Fire	51
Strengthened Through Temptation	13
Suffering Is Never For Nothing	62
Taste and See	16
The Tempting Snare of Agendas	57
There Are None So Blind As Those That Will Not See	53
There is Power in the Voice of God...Listen, That It May Be Well	35
Wash and Be Cleansed!	31
Which One are You?	38
You Will Keep My Decrees and Do Them	34

List of Authors

Rev. Robert Abarno	36
Macario Acosta	38
Venance Basili	13
Sr. Gertrude O. Bassey	27
Susan Breslin	53
Marie-Madeleine Chopard	34
Shannon Curran	54
Ms. Minta Davis	63
Lauren Desmit	22
Theresa Duff	16
Bonnie Duvall	24
Patty Gavilan, RN, CMI	39
Mary Herbert	42
Dr. Debra Jervay-Pendergrass	52
Fr. Matthias Jjooga	60
Gillian Kane	30
Rev. Dan Kirkpatrick	64
Amy Kulesa	57, 66
Judy Liliensiek	11
Stephen and Stephanie Lloyd	28
Linda Mastro	51
Joyce McCracken	56
Peggy McGinn	44
Lynn E. Moran	45
Rev. Dr. Brenda A. Nelson	21, 62
Tessa Newton, MA	48
Betty Norman	41
The Rev. Carol Pinkham Oak, D.Min.	47

Johnny and Pam Phillips	9
Mark Pozza	17
Michelle Randall	15
Traci Ray	10
Clintonette Robinson	35
Bernadette Rolland	19
Kathy Scarnaty	12
Ann Schwartz	25
Stephanie Sheehan	31
Dr. Matthew Silver	46
Tim and Katy Stanton	23
Nicholas Stein	40
Mary Jane Strobel	18
Bonnie Talty	50
Emily Thrush	33
Marie Truffer	58
Anne-Marie Whelan	29



All photos were taken by
Liz O'Neill, Sisters of Bon Secours,
USA Communications Director,
during a pilgrimage to the
Holy Land sponsored by the
Bon Secours Associates in
February 2023.

Book design by Paula Regan.



February 14, Ash Wednesday

Paul's Plea to the Corinthians

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

REFLECTION: Paul preached to the Corinthians saying, *“He has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us. This makes us ambassadors for Christ.”* In the early history of the Bon Secours Sisters, as home nurses, they cared for a wide swath of French society, including those with secular beliefs and those who had abandoned their faith. The Sisters, setting the example by their loving and caring words and deeds became powerful evangelists. When those Sisters gave each other a “high-five”, it was not necessarily because a deathbed patient recovered, but rather because the patient asked for a priest as an avenue to get right with God. (*Johnny’s words*)

When is the best time to get right with God? Paul told the Corinthians *“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”* Not next year, not next month, not next week, not tomorrow. Now! When I once told a friend I felt burdened, she told me I had a weed growing inside. Later that day I entered my garden and noticed a large weed that needed to be removed. But it had been a long, tiring day and I was worn out – maybe I could take care of it later. As I stared at the offending weed, I imagined it sprouting more and larger weeds. I had to act now. I remembered my friend’s words as I pulled up the weed and decided to place my internal weed burden in God’s hands. Waiting would have gained nothing and acting now enabled my forgiveness and healing. (*Pam’s words*)

By Johnny and Pam Phillips
Bon Secours Associates, Virginia

PRAYER: Dear Lord, may we strive boldly to be more Christ-like, and by our personal example of love and forgiveness, be the best Christian representatives we can be. *Amen.*

Choose Life!

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

REFLECTION: I can either choose life with God or death without God. Our God is the only God. How does this message apply to me in this Lenten season?

I turn my attention to not spending time with those “other gods.” I interpret the “other gods” as things that are attention-grabbers & time-wasters. Fear and anxiety are some of the “other gods” in my life. For Lent, I want to give up my “other gods.” I want to do things that bring me closer to God and farther away from fear and anxiety. I distance from fear and anxiety by spending time in daily prayer, watching Mass and Bible study on television and reading the Bible. The Bible verse I think of frequently is Philippians 4:6: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” I also reflect on the Mass readings on the EWTN website and read about the lives of the saints on <https://www.catholic-saints.info>.

When I am relieved from fear and anxiety, I feel more inspired to serve others and spread God’s hope and love to my family and community.

By Traci Ray

Bon Secours Associate, South Carolina

PRAYER: Thank you, Beautiful Savior, for all that You have done for us. We are especially reminded during the Lenten season, that You have given us an option to choose life. Thank you for being a shining example of how to follow your commandments, through Your Life and Your Living Word. Thank you for our guide, the Holy Spirit. When we meditate on Your example, generosity, and love, let us continue to be inspired to serve You and serve others. One God, forever and ever. *Amen.*

Ritual Versus Sacrifice

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 58:1-9

REFLECTION: “Your prayers won’t get off the ground” (*The Message* by Eugene Peterson). I would encourage you to ponder this translation of today’s reading. It puts it very clearly about how we are to practice our faith: true daily practice of serving God through worship, relationship, and service. During Lent, let us practice actions or giving on behalf of someone else. A phone call, a prepared meal, a visit ... I see these practices as being expressions of “good help” to others and connecting to the Sisters of Bon Secours and the Associates.

Closing with the words of Henry Nouwen in *Life of the Beloved*: “To identify the movement of the Spirit in our lives, I have found it is helpful to use four words: ‘taken,’ ‘blessed,’ ‘broken’ and ‘given.’” These words also express a commitment to being “good help.” Peace of Christ.

By Judy Liliensiek

Bon Secours Associate, Wisconsin

PRAYER: May you be enriched with the readings provided. My hope is that we will all grow in faith and service as we journey through Lent. I pray in thanksgiving for the Sisters of Bon Secours, Associates and all others of faith as we proclaim our faith and fellowship. *Amen.*



Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin

Scripture Reading: Luke 5:27-32

REFLECTION: When Jesus chose to have dinner with Levi the tax collector, who in those times was deeply despised and regarded as a thief, he intentionally focused on Levi without disgust. He does this even though others do not approve. Instead, he celebrates him in hope that his loving influence will show Levi how receiving God into our lives can change us. Jesus proclaimed a message that he was not there to call the righteous but to help the sinners repent.

An important lesson in this story is that we all fall short at times in the ways of God and to remember that Jesus offers salvation to everyone. If we are blessed, we should use those blessings to help those who sin, to try and show them the way of the Lord, not ignore or exclude them. To do otherwise goes against the teachings of the Gospel.

By Kathy Scarnaty

Office Coordinator, Bon Secours Associate Office, USA

PRAYER: Lord, forgive me for the times when I am swayed by prejudice, when I judge, despise or exclude others. I want to be at your table no matter who else is there! Grant me the grace to respond to your call—to follow you wherever you lead. *Amen.*



Strengthened Through Temptation

Scripture Reading: Mark 1:12-15

REFLECTION: Today's scripture speaks of the temptation of Jesus. Jesus was tempted but was able to overcome all the temptations he went through. Jesus is our role model in this. As Christians we should follow his example to make all the necessary efforts to not fall into temptation. Human life here on Earth is a life of warfare. Therefore, we must expect to be tempted by evils. We must be aware of the existence of what might tempt us. As human beings we are tempted towards sinful and illegal things. Temptations are the part of our journey as human beings living on earth. They are, in fact, very important for our spiritual growth, as our struggles often strengthen our spiritual lives. Temptations motivate us to be better persons. At the end of every temptation there is a reward: we arrive at a deepened sense of wisdom and fulfillment as we live out our role in realizing the Kingdom of God. God, let us be strengthened when tempted so that we can learn from those temptations and become humble in realizing our need for God. In case we have faced temptations and tried and failed, we should not give up. We should pray, keep on trying and trust in the process, knowing that Christ is with us as our role model.

By Venance Basili

Bon Secours Associate, Tanzania

PRAYER: Most high and glorious God, enlighten our hearts and minds to understand that temptations help us grow spiritually. Help us to live a Lent focused on freedom and generosity, helping others transform their suffering into love, justice, hope and peace. *Amen.*



February 19: First Monday of Lent

Sheep and Goats?

Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:31-46

REFLECTION: The vision of Christ, like a shepherd, separating the nations of sheep from the goats on judgment day leads me to question why sheep over goats?

The French tale of Mr. Seguin's Goat* was a staple of my childhood. Mr. Seguin loved and delighted in his intelligent, vivacious and willful goat, Blanquette, whom he sought to protect by all means against the dangers of the preying wolf. Despite his efforts, Blanquette, driven by curiosity and determination, escapes. Following a wondrous day of adventures, she again ignores Mr. Seguin's calls, and after a long night of battle with the wolf, succumbs.

Our culture tends to denigrate sheep, on the other hand, for their "herd" mentality, characterizing them as needy, compliant, helpless, if not hapless. In earlier times, however, sheep were prized for these very characteristics, and the bond and inter-dependence between the shepherd and his flock, made more tangible. While the shepherd is devoted to the nurturing and care of his charges, leading them to "green pastures"*** and "still waters"***, using his "rod and staff"*** to guide and to protect respectively, the sheep's nature also prospers the shepherd and his community. Their fleece, hide, milk, meat and even their presence provide sustenance, if not comfort. Both parties rely and thrive on this symbiotic relationship.

Jesus calls us as individuals and nations to be His sheep, but also co-shepherds, tending to the needs of each and all, so that, together, we may continue to grow the Kingdom of God, on Earth as in Heaven. (*by Alphonse Daudet,**Psalm 23)

By Michelle Randall

Bon Secours Associate, Maryland and France

PRAYER: Prayer: Lord, thank you for Your infinite love for us. Shepherd us so that we may provide for each other as You do for us. *Amen.*

Taste and See

Scripture Reading: Psalm 34

REFLECTION: “Taste and see that the Lord is good” is the line from today’s psalm that is often used as the response when Psalm 34 is said or sung responsorially during liturgies. The words “*taste and see*” always remind me of what we say to a child, or even an adult, to encourage them to try a new food. Implied is the idea that you cannot possibly know what it is like until you have tried it for yourself: you cannot reject it out of hand, you may be surprised! This is what I should be saying to those who do not know Christ or who have distanced themselves from Him and have forgotten how good He is.

There is so much contained in this psalm. The psalmist has given us a template for Christian living. We are to bless and praise the Lord together, turn aside from evil, seek and strive for peace, and look to him for strength and comfort.

We are reminded that life is not an easy ride, but hope and encouragement are ever present when we trust in the Lord. He is aware of our distress and listens to our prayers. If we seek refuge in Him we will not be condemned, despite our weaknesses and failings.

By Theresa Duff

Bon Secours Associate, Scotland and Associate Director, Great Britain and Ireland

PRAYER: Dear Lord, during this season of Lent may we be inspired by the words of the psalmist David to draw ever closer to you. Living in an era similar to when the Congregation of Bon Secours was founded, when many have abandoned the Church and denied its teachings, may we, like our foundresses, “look towards Him and be radiant.” Let the light of Christ within us draw others to Him to “taste and see that the Lord is good.”
Amen.

Fruit of the Soul

Scripture Reading: Jonah 3:1-10

REFLECTION: Love conquers anger and hate within the soul. Just like the weed overtakes a garden, it is important to tend to the soul as a gardener tends to their crop. If you do not pull the weeds from your soul, how will you leave room to allow love to grow? It is important to undo the weeds that have grown up in the soul and to plant the seeds of love within our heart and soul. Just like the gardener must remove the weeds so they will have a strong and beautiful garden, our spiritual gardening will allow our fruit to be plentiful and good for all.

By Mark Pozza

Bon Secours Associate, Virginia

PRAYER: As we move through this Lenten season, allow the love of Christ to fill our souls and remove all darkness that might dwell in our hearts. In Jesus’ Name. *Amen.*



God Answers Prayer Generously

Scripture Reading: Matthew 7:7-12

REFLECTION: In this scripture passage from Matthew, Jesus says to his disciples, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Our God is a loving and generous Father as He invites all of us to continually ask and seek, so that we may find and receive. I relate and live by this command, asking not only for myself, but for all those needing prayer. Our Associate group gathers in fellowship to pray for each other and our concerns, but also for the greater good of our world. We are given hope when we ask, we show faith as we seek, and receive grace as we learn how God has answered our prayers. This is the power of prayer . . . in prayers answered, sometimes not as we expected, God’s perfect plan unfolds for us.

By Mary Jane Strobel

Bon Secours Associate, South Carolina

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for our blessings and for the good gifts you bestow upon us. May we continually be faithful in our prayers to ask, seek and find, but also in our prayers of gratitude for all you’ve given. May we always keep our brothers and sisters in our prayers, as well as care for our natural world, as Pope Francis has spoken in *Laudato Si* . . . as all are connected. May we rise to action to further help our neighbors through acts of kindness and support. May we hold the Sisters of Bon Secours in prayer and high esteem for their charism, charity, and examples of good help. May we continue, as Associates, to honor their legacy now and for times to come. *Amen.*

The Meaning of Forgiveness

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:20-26

REFLECTION: Be reconciled first, to know how to ask for forgiveness: this is the commandment of God of which Jesus Christ reminds us. Often forgiveness is difficult to offer because it requires much humility and the recognition that the other is, first and foremost, our sister or brother: yes, our sister or brother, whatever the nature of the offense. Man can fear human justice, because it can be harsh, but, above all, we must fear the justice of God.

If the Old Testament condemned murder, today’s text shows us that anger and injustice are also condemnable in the eyes of God. The New Testament speaks honestly about our experience as human beings. Certainly, we are not all potential assassins, but anger and injustice are part of our daily lives. We are, therefore, all called to forgive, as the way to enter the Kingdom of God.

In this text, God calls us to open our hearts to others. We cannot call ourselves Christians if we do not know how to forgive another who has offended us. God also asks us to listen to His Word. His Kingdom is wide open for all those who will know how to live by his command: Love one another as I have loved you. It is our duty to transmit and live this message of love, in which we are asked to forgive and express the immeasurable love of God for sinful man.

The Old and New Testaments, which illuminate each other, tell us the same thing: God’s project is the Salvation of human beings.

By Bernadette Rolland

Bon Secours Associate, France

PRAYER: Lord, teach us to love. Transform our sometimes very hard hearts into hearts burning with love, like that of Jesus Christ, so we can join Him. During this time of Lent, may our efforts tend toward ever more love to lead us to live in peace. Lord, teach us to love. *Amen.*



February 24: First Saturday of Lent

Loving Like Jesus

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:43-48

REFLECTION: A few months ago, I was moved and theologically challenged by a sermon from the Reverend Dr. Howard-John Wesley of the Alfred St. Baptist Church (Alexandria, VA) entitled “What’s Love Got To Do With It?” We are reminded of the mandate for love in today’s scripture. Jesus challenges our thinking and theology as He presents an opposing view to the law as set forth by man – a law that reflects self-centeredness, a “me focus” vs. an “other focus”.

Jesus, in this passage, speaks from experiences of having to walk among His enemies, be the target of opposition from the religious leaders of that day, having to navigate ministry in an “hostile environment”, and doing the will of the Father with the knowledge of facing His imminent crucifixion. In the text Jesus speaks to the kind of love we ought to exhibit—that “radical transformative” love, the love that He is, the love that He emulates.

In the current political climate of our nation, “wars and rumors of wars” in the earth, where strife, bitterness, and hate appear to be the agenda of the day, the words from Jesus reminds us of what we, as His followers, are called to do and to be. The message from Jesus to us is that we are to be Ambassadors of love, gifting that “radical transformative” love for all regardless of their political affiliation, race/ethnicity, faith, or gender.

As we journey through this season of Lent, we are reminded of the exemplar of this “radical, transformative” love—our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who came to serve and not be served, and made the ultimate sacrifice for all mankind, even to include those who were perpetrators and bystanders of His horrific crucifixion. “What’s Love Got To Do With It?”: for a follower of Christ, everything.

By Rev. Dr. Brenda A. Nelson

Bon Secours Associate and Program Coordinator, Associate Office, USA

PRAYER: Father, we thank You for the awesome gift of Your wonderful “radical, transformative” love, perfect love. Father, teach us how to love well, in Jesus’ Name. *Amen.*

God is For Us

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:31-34

REFLECTION: In the midst of life's trials and tribulations, we often find ourselves questioning whether we are truly loved and supported. In these moments, we can turn to the words of Romans 8:31-34 for assurance. This passage reminds us of the unbreakable bond we share with our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ.

The verse begins with a compelling question: *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* This question sets the tone for the entire passage. It's a reminder that when we have God on our side, we have the ultimate source of strength, love, and protection. No earthly force or adversity can prevail against His divine purpose for our lives.

The passage goes on to emphasize the depth of God's love. He did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all. This sacrifice demonstrates the immeasurable love that God has for each of us. If He was willing to give us His most precious gift, can we doubt that He will provide everything else we need?

We are assured that no accusation or condemnation can stand against us. God, who knows our hearts intimately, has declared us worthy through faith. Jesus, who conquered death and sits at the right hand of God, continually intercedes for us. His love and advocacy are unwavering.

In times of doubt or difficulty, remember this passage as a source of assurance. God is for us, His love is boundless. Let this truth fill your heart with peace and confidence as you navigate the challenges of life.

By Lauren Desmit

Program Manager, Bon Secours Young Adults, USA

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we pray that in moments of doubt and adversity, we find solace in Your boundless love and the unwavering support of your Son, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

God's Way of Doing Things

Scripture Reading: Luke 6:36-38

REFLECTION: Parents and children often get into power struggles. Children will ask "why?" and parents will answer, "because I said so." We heard that as children and admit to losing patience with our own children when they challenged our authority. These words of Jesus from the gospel of Luke can give us a new perspective on power and authority. Jesus seems to say in these verses that we should behave a certain way toward others because that is how God behaves toward us. Why should we show mercy? Because God is merciful to us. Does the same logic apply to those next words of Jesus? Will we truly not be judged if we don't judge others? Will we not be condemned if we don't condemn others? We get a picture here of a God who wants to give us a reason for God's directives, a God who wants to answer our "why" with something more than "because I said so." Why must we be merciful and forgive and give to others with abundance? The answer is simply that God is merciful and forgiving to us. Our loving God pours blessings into our laps to remind us that stingy giving is not God's way of doing things.

By Tim and Katy Stanton

Bon Secours Associates, Maryland

PRAYER: Loving God, You show us how to treat others and give us reasons why your way is best. Empower us to show mercy and to forgive others. Help us to put judgment and condemnation aside. Help us to give the way you give and receive with grateful hearts the many blessings you pour into our laps. *Amen.*

Remembering Our Source

Scripture Reading: Matthew 23:1-12

REFLECTION: I wonder how differently Jesus might speak to us today, sharing the message Matthew documented? Might we evolve closer to the Reflection of His Light? Here I've tried to relay the message refined and focused on the positive changes He sees.

1. In 2023 Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples:
2. The old religions and governments were brought forth to help guide humanity toward right living in community; and
3. To oversee our actions. You were expected to follow the law to learn love and respect for others.
4. You (my brothers and sisters) are self-aware now; knowing your connection to God and understanding the privilege of helping others at every opportunity.
5. Everything you do is from your hearts; there is no concern for how you appear.
6. Graciously, you share the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in all the most holy places.
7. Lovingly, you greet all others with respect and proclaim your unity with God through connection with every being.
8. You humble yourselves as teachers as well as learners – knowing you are both.
9. You recognize God as part of every one of us.
10. You proclaim everyone as master, recognizing the unique gift each of us bring.
11. You serve out of love for humanity, all creation and for God.
12. Your humility is your strength, bringing God into clearer focus for each other.

By Bonnie Duvall

Bon Secours Associate, Virginia

PRAYER: Oh, God, I live to be a reflection of your benevolence, ever connecting with you and all those you've sent into my life with love. *Amen.*

Looking Inward and Out

Scripture Reading: Matthew 20:17-28

REFLECTION: In today's Scripture we hear Jesus ask a somewhat simple question. "*What is it that you want?*" Do we take the time to slow down and really think of the answer? There are many times in my life where I have fallen into the routine of prayer, a season where I am just going through the motions and not taking the time to sit and reflect on what I am asking for. In today's reading I hear Jesus asking us to slow down and reflect, to look inward to see the desires of our hearts. Can we let Jesus into the deepest desires of our hearts? Take some time today to sit and reflect. Then take the time to write or speak those desires to Jesus.

As the scripture continues, Jesus is also calling us to look beyond ourselves. Jesus goes on to say "*just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" There are many ways to serve others. This can be done by praying for those in need, volunteering at a local food pantry, senior center, or homeless shelter. We can make a meal for a neighbor who lives alone or offer to drive a friend to their doctor appointments. How will you take time this week to serve others?

By Ann Schwartz

Recruitment Leader, Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry

PRAYER: Holy Spirit come and teach us to pray. Come into our hearts and open us to see the deepest desires you have placed there. Guide us to where and to whom we are called to serve. May my words and actions reflect your love. In Jesus' name. *Amen.*



February 29: Second Thursday of Lent

A Call to Trust In God and Not in Human Beings

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-10

REFLECTION: Dear Sisters and Brothers, the Lenten season is a grace-filled season, where our Church calls us to repentance. It is a season to examine the areas where we have offended our God, to make amends as well as the areas in which we have done well and to keep it up.

This text of Jeremiah is very relevant here. Old Testament prophets like Jeremiah were the conscience of Israel, constantly reminding the people of their covenant terms with God. *“I will be your God and you will be my people if you keep my commandments.”* God was ever faithful, but the Israelites were always unfaithful. They constantly turned away from their God “Yahweh” and trusted in other gods. Jeremiah remarked *“They have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, to dig themselves a leaky cistern that cannot hold water.”* Yet it was Yahweh who saved them from the hands of their enemies and brought them out of bondage in the land of Egypt.

This text is not just for the Israelites of old; it is for us, the new Israel; for those of us, too, who celebrate the 200th anniversary of bringing “Bon Secours” to those in need. Let us pause here and check if we are like the Israelites who abandoned God or if we are with God.

How many of us do acknowledge God in prayer or even attend to our Sunday obligation? Let us not give into the fear of the unknown but keep trusting in God that we may continue to bear good fruits. *“If today you hear his voice harden not your heart.”*

By Sr. Gertrude O. Bassey
Bon Secours Associates, South Carolina

PRAYER: God our Father, in this 200th year of our celebration, we thank you for your faithfulness and love. We pray for forgiveness for the many times we have forsaken you. Please take us back and let Your face shine on us and we shall be saved. Like the apostles we pray “increase our faith God,” through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

God's Plan

Scripture Reading: Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28

REFLECTION: Joseph relayed his dreams to his father and brothers that greatness was God's plan for him. God assured Joseph he would rise in power to leadership over his father and brothers. This was evidence of divine blessings rather than Joseph's own ability. Israel or Jacob, Joseph's father, loved him, the youngest, more than the other brothers. Jacob gave Joseph a special robe which made the brothers even more angry, causing them to be jealous and deceitful. We learn that God can use the evil of others to accomplish His plan. God's saving victory happens through sin and suffering. The brothers showed they valued profit over brotherhood, they stripped Joseph of the special robe, and plotted to kill him. However, instead, the brothers threw Joseph into a pit, later retrieved the body, sold him for money, and sent him into a lifetime of servanthood. Their first Inclination was to defeat the dream.

Let us reflect on how we may sometimes deceitfully protect ourselves at the expense of those in a marginalized space.

By Stephen and Stephanie Lloyd
Bon Secours Associates, Virginia

PRAYER: Lord, thank you for your guidance and protection. Open our hearts and minds as we listen to your Word in this Lenten Season. Help us to recognize and eliminate deceit in ourselves at the expense of those less fortunate or marginalized. Strengthen us as you strengthened Joseph to believe and trust in you, our God. *Amen.*

Everything I Have is Yours

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:1-32

REFLECTION: How like the older son am I: the one who sulks because his wayward brother has returned, having squandered his inheritance and the father throws him a party? Why am I not getting the recognition I deserve, having stayed and worked the farm with my father like a dutiful heir? Do I appreciate what I have? Like the earlier stories in today's reading, do we appreciate the value of one lost sheep or one lost coin? Do we even notice them missing? Material wealth is not what God promises us. God promises us that everything He has is ours if we want it: His love, his forgiveness, his mercy . . . and yet do we take that all for granted? God is always with us. May we notice that Divine presence this day.

By Anne-Marie Whelan
Evangelisation and Vocations Officer, CBS, Ireland

PRAYER: Lord, you promise that everything You have is mine. May I be grateful for each grace you bestow on me this day, particularly those of which I am unaware. May I notice the sheep that strays, the coin that is missing, those in my life from whom I have become distant. May I take a step toward them this day and reach out with a message, a phone call, or even a letter, to let them know that I am there for them. Lord, help me to be less like the older son and to be grateful for all that You give me each day. *Amen.*

May My Heart be a Temple of the Holy Spirit

Scripture Reading: John 2:13-25

REFLECTION: Lord Jesus, there are so few times in the Gospels that we see you act or speak in anger. On those occasions when you have acted or spoken in anger it was always to condemn hypocrisy. Just like the Temple Officials am I guilty of giving an outward appearance of living a good Catholic life, committed to serving God, whilst simultaneously being self-seeking and self-serving? Lord, what you found in the Temple disturbed you greatly. Your reactions remind us that you are the true defender of our relationship with God, as you set about cleansing the Temple of all that distracted from prayer and true encounter with Him. Is my life so full of self and worldly clutter that, I too, am a hypocrite?

By Gillian Kane

Bon Secours Associate, Wales

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, I pray that Lent will be a time of contemplating those times when you have revealed yourself to me, and yet I have allowed myself to become distracted from you by worldly preoccupations.

Dear God, this passage from the Gospels reminds us that the more we study the character, the words, and deeds of your Son, listening intently to what they say, the more the power of the Holy Spirit will illumine our minds and hearts, deepening our relationship with the Blessed Trinity. I pray that through this ever-deepening union, we are transformed into true Temples of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Wash and Be Cleansed!

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-15

REFLECTION: God's ways and thoughts are above our ways and thoughts. This is a lesson we learn from today's reading—we cannot apply human logic to the work of God's saving grace.

Notice how the action is spurred on by the voice of a slave girl in today's narrative. Naaman seeks out the man of God at her urging. Later, Naaman's servants implore him to follow Elisha's instructions. As so often in Scripture, it is the marginalized and lowly who have a powerful part to play in the story of salvation.

Don't be afraid to ask for the "impossible" – and don't forget to say thanks. We don't need offerings of silver and gold: our faith suffices. God's grace and healing is, thankfully, bigger than what we can imagine.

By Stephanie Sheehan

Bon Secours Associate, Ireland

PRAYER: Lord, I stand in the need of your healing—make me aware that I can be an instrument of that liberation and healing to others.

Help me to see that I do not need to fully understand your ways in order to enter into the mystery of your salvation and the greater story of which I am a part. Let your ways, and your grace, be enough for me. Make me attentive to your hand at work in my story, even when it doesn't seem to make much sense to me!

You have liberated us, O Lord: in this season of Lent, may we take the time to listen to your prophecies and follow your Word, that we may wash and be cleansed anew every day. Open our eyes again to the miracle of your saving love, that we may continue to confess our faith in you. *Amen.*



March 5: Third Tuesday of Lent

Excessive Grace

Scripture Reading: Matthew 18:21-35

REFLECTION: Today's story begins with Peter's question to Jesus, indicating confidence that he was going above and beyond the norm to forgive someone seven times. How striking, then, to hear Jesus' radical and grace-filled instruction, inviting us to lose track of the times we forgive and instead position ourselves as vessels of abundant mercy, compassion, and love.

Jesus enjoys telling stories, understanding the power of narrative to carry compelling truth straight to our hearts. Where do you find yourself reacting the most in this story? What feels audacious or outrageous? Can we see ourselves in these characters?

What if God's heart desires our full liberation from conditional and calculated "fairness," and instead, invites us into the healing expansiveness of grace, mercy, generosity, patience, empathy, curiosity, humility, compassion, and kinship? We allow ourselves to be moved by another's story, and rather than clinging to the need to be right, we practice love in action. Our tally sheet marking who owes what would dissolve into oblivion, and we would become known for our gracious spirits and compassionate responses.

What flood of relief would you experience if your *mortgage*, *student loan*, *hospital bill*, or *car payment* was paid in full by a generous benefactor? Can we channel that gratitude to inform our responses when a neighbor, colleague, family member, friend, or stranger requests patience and understanding from us?

By Emily Thrush

Site Manager, Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry

PRAYER: God of mercy, compassion, and extravagant grace: thank you for your generous Spirit. Heal us from the need to be seen as right and liberate us into your more loving way. Give us hearts that remember the grace we have received and show us ways to extend that abundance to those we encounter. *Amen.*

You Will Keep My Decrees and Do Them

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9

REFLECTION: Here the particular character of the whole book of Deuteronomy is presented to us in a very striking manner. “Listen,” and “practice,” so that you “live” and “possess.” This is a general principle and one that remains. It was true for Israel, and it is true for us. The path of life and the secret is simple obedience to the holy commandments of God. God did not give us His Word to examine or discuss, but to obey it. It is necessary that, through grace, our hearts be submitted with joy to the statutes of our heavenly Father, that we may walk in the path of life and truly enjoy all the riches which we possess in Christ

A single disobedience deprived Moses of entering the Promised Land. He is, therefore, better placed than anyone to exhort the people to obey the ordinances of the Lord “*so that you may enter the land...*” (v. 1). It is as if he were saying to them: *Do not let it happen to you as to me: listen and do well the commandments of the Lord!* “*This will be your wisdom and your understanding,*” insists the man of God (v. 6). By obeying the will of God, we put aside our own will, we give way to the wisdom from above which replaces ours (Jas. 3:17-18). It follows that keeping the Word is at the same time “*carefully guarding our soul*” (v. 9).

The authority of this divine Word is confirmed; Moses recalls under what conditions and with what solemnity it was communicated. Therefore, these verses remind us to add nothing and take nothing away from the word of God (4:1-4). There is also the fact that obedience makes one wise (4:5-10).

By Marie-Madeleine Chopard

Bon Secours Associate, France and Associate Director, France

PRAYER: Lord, during this Lenten season, help us to obey and practice Your commandments, even if we do not always understand them. Help us to trust You to guide us on the path that will lead us to You, whatever difficulties we find on this path. *Amen.*

There is Power in the Voice of God...Listen, That It May Be Well

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 7:23-28

REFLECTION: Reflect upon a time when you were seeking GOD for guidance, HE spoke, but you did not listen, and chose your own way. See now, the outcome of your choice. Please, do not be condemned, yet embrace the lesson, and the mighty gift of the Holy Spirit . . . the VOICE of GOD! When we listen and adhere, we will be given the direction of protection, a song of strength, the faith for forward, the help for healing, and a vision for victory! No matter the circumstance, GOD will speak when we seek HIM. We must listen and obey. Our obedience is better than sacrifice. Listen to the voice of the LORD; in it, is all that we need to work our faith for the building of HIS KINGDOM by being Good Help to ourselves, and those we so graciously serve.

By Clintonette Robinson

Bon Secours Associate, South Carolina

PRAYER: Our Father, we come thanking you for all that you’ve done. Thanking you for a future of praise. Father, we ask that you give us the gift of discernment so that we may know when you are speaking. We pray that you give us an open heart to receive what you share, and what we’ve heard, so that we may move without stubbornness. We are your people with ears to hear, we will listen and obey. Make it well with us GOD! Thank you for allowing us to inherit all the blessings that you have for us so that we may be a blessing to others. Thank you for your grace and mercies during times when we did not listen, and beyond. We praise and honor you. *Amen.*

An Abundance of Love

Scripture Reading: Hosea 14:2-10

REFLECTION: These verses in Hosea invite us to be attentive to God. The people Hosea was talking to had turned away from God. He was telling them that God would heal their disloyalty and love them freely. *“They shall flourish as a garden.”* In our own lives and journeys how are we being invited by God to flourish as a garden? As Associates, how is God calling each of us to share God’s love in word, in deed, and in action? Caring for all that God has and is creating is an invitation to all of us. How are each of us being called to help those in need in our country and in all countries around the world? The Sisters have been doing this for two hundred years! Their journey of healing, sharing, and caring has touched the lives of so many people around the world. They are a blessing to so many people. How are each of us being called to do the same? In our prayer, in our lives, and in our actions God is calling us to express God’s love. We are to fulfill that which God has created each of us to be, to do, and to become.

By Rev. Robert Abarno

Bon Secours Associate, Maryland

PRAYER: Thank you, God for giving the Sisters of Bon Secours and the Associates the gift of life and your presence with us all in every moment and throughout all you have created! **Amen.**



Which One Are You?

Scripture Reading: Luke 18:9-14

REFLECTION: In Luke chapter 18: 9 -14 our Lord teaches us using a parable. Two men, the first a Pharisee and the second a publican. The Pharisee prayed to God exalting himself, thanking God that he was not like sinful men. Our Lord Jesus quotes the publican as saying, *“God be merciful unto me a sinner.”* Our Lord then gives us some key actions for our lives. One: *“for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased”*. Two: *“he that humbleth himself will exalted”*. Our divine mission is to lose ourselves for the sake of Christ. When we love God and others in a pure way, selflessly, we will become who we really are and who we were created to be. Once we have come to this realization, we will also humbly ask for our God to have mercy on us as we recognize our sinful condition and God’s ever abundant mercy. By realizing that God has a mission for each of us here on this earth we will band together to make a difference. Once we realize our commitment to the love of God then we can change this world to be a better place. The Sisters have set forth example after example of how we should live a consecrated life honoring the Holy Trinity. May God bless us to serve Him and honor Him through our lives.

By Macario Acosta
Bon Secours Associate, South Carolina

PRAYER: Our Holy and Everlasting Father we approach your throne asking forgiveness for our unrighteousness. Help us to share Your love so that others can see you. Help us to love our Earth so that mankind can see Your love through creation. Lord, bless our Sisters who are committed to a life of compassion for those dying and in need. Bless Associates all over this world to be a help to those dying and in need. We thank you for Your love and ask these things in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

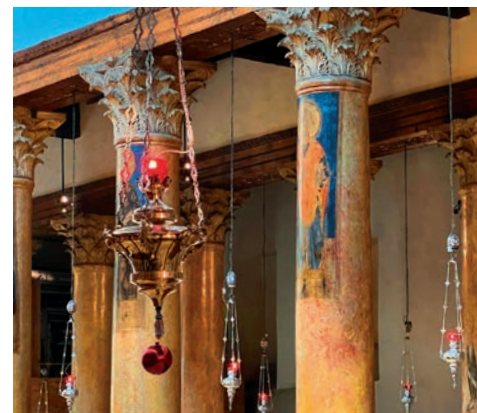
Our Light

Scripture Reading: John 3:14-21

REFLECTION: Sometimes we think we see God’s word in the sound bites that pierce our world on a daily basis in so many ways. There is so much “light” in this world that begs for our attention. Sometimes in following that “light” we are blinded and end up in darkness, not always knowing how we got there. In these times it is especially important to remember that while the “light” of the world eventually dims, the true LIGHT of the world always finds us. The true Light is God’s love for us and it is so strong that he sent his SON into the world to save us.

By Patty Gavilan, RN, CMI
Bon Secours Associate, Virginia

PRAYER: Lord, we ask you to keep guiding us to YOUR light. While we may be surrounded by much of the artificial light of this world, may YOUR loving light pierce our heart and allow us to see you in all the beauty you have created. May your light fill us with love, forgiveness and healing. May it illuminate the darkness we may find ourselves in and lead us to YOU. **Amen.**



I Will Rejoice in Jerusalem and Exult in My People

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 65:17-21

REFLECTION: In today's reading the prophet Isaiah lays out God's wondrous vision of new heavens and a new Earth, that the new heavens and new earth will be so wonderful that all people will bask in rejoicing and happiness and live long, full, blessed lives. But along the way he says something curious: *"the things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind."* The idea of not remembering the past sits uneasily in this Lenten season, and even more uneasily in this 200th Anniversary year of Bon Secours. In Lent, so much of our reflection seems to tend toward making up for past wrongs and striving to do better in the future. And in this anniversary year we lovingly recall the Good Help we have been and those who have gone before us being that Good Help. Today though, the Lord is telling us to turn the corner and look to the future, a future full of hope. God is inviting us to make a break with the past, to let go, in order to enter into an even better future. In this season of Lent, let us begin to look forward to the new creation God is bringing to life. In this year of celebration of Bon Secours, let us begin to turn today to what the next 200 years might be with God's blessings and grace guiding us every step of the way.

By Nicholas Stein

International Director, Bon Secours Young Adults

PRAYER: Lord, we ask for the ability and grace to delight and exult in your people in the same way your son Jesus delights and exults in each of us.
Amen.

The Healing at the Pool

Scripture Reading: John 5:1-16

REFLECTION: Jesus asked the sick, suffering man that he encountered at the pool of Bethesda, *"Do you want to be well?"* We can all benefit from asking ourselves this question during this time of waiting. Am I ready to identify my weaknesses and where I need to heal? Do I take the time to attend to my own needs, so that I am there to help others? Do I take the time to notice those around me who could benefit from my time and attention, or am I blind to the needs of others as well? During this Lenten season, may we ask Jesus to heal us and help us become more complete in his love. And may we pause and become more aware of those around us, as well as reflect on how and where our time and talents can serve our community as a healing presence.

By Betty Norman

Bon Secours Associate, Maryland

PRAYER: Lord, I thank you for your healing presence in my life. Please help me be more open to understanding the suffering of so many within our global communities. Let me open my eyes to those who need love and healing within my own family and friends. Help me to shed my tendency to concentrate on my own needs above the needs of those around me, to hurry from one task to the next. May I reflect your love and healing presence to all those I encounter during the days ahead. *Amen.*



Restoration of Compassion Through Community

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 49:8-15

REFLECTION: Our scripture today is about the restoration of community with each other, with creation, with our Creator. God's people will gather to celebrate the compassion shown us, shared by us.

While personally responsible for our journey, we do not nurture or restore our spirit flame alone. We are not just spirits; our human experience demands interconnectedness. A building near me boasts: ReStore. It is a Habitat for Humanity presence. Their mission is to put God's love into action; to bring people together to build homes, communities, and hope. ReStore challenges the passerby to reestablish harmonious living.

The words of Scripture in Isaiah, written in and for community, do not spark, nurture, or inspire fully within the solitude of our ourselves. The divine work God invites us into is most fully realized when shared and processed within community. We carry each other in difficult times as God carries us. Christ modeled this sharing when He accepted Simon of Cyrene's help carrying His cross. Like Simon, we do not always know when we will be pressed into service. No one of us is an island. We are connected in both our social humanity and in our divine spirit as we pursue God and live love in this world.

By Mary Herbert

Bon Secours Associate, South Carolina

PRAYER: Today I praise God for the gifts of grace to see, and accept responsibility for, my selfish actions which harm myself, my community, and all of creation. Today, with the help of scripture and my Bon Secours community, I commit to transform one of my actions from a selfish desire to a nurturing interdependence. Thank you, Creator God, for the community of love you breathed us into. *Amen.*



The Lord's Word is Truth

Scripture Reading: John 5:31-47

REFLECTION: This gospel reading challenges us to live our lives based upon impressing only one person: God. Jesus is addressing the Pharisees who live their lives to impress each other: quoting scripture, praying in public, giving gifts in the temple for all to see but then having no love for sinners or anyone not like them. The Pharisees looked to each other to provide testimony on the virtuous lives they were living. Jesus tells them, and us, that testimony from humans is inaccurate and the only important witness in our lives is God. Jesus in the reading declares “If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true.” Jesus calls on John the Baptist to testify to his identity and mission. John the Baptist fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy, that a voice would cry “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord” thus laying the groundwork for the ministry of Jesus Christ. Reflecting on this scripture reaffirms that God desires to be close to us and all we need to do is to allow him to love us. Unlike the Pharisees, during our Lenten journey, we can accomplish this by prayer, fasting and giving alms and that in doing so God is the only witness to our good acts. The charism of Bon Secours supports the message of hope and assurance that God loves us.

By Peggy McGinn

Bon Secours Associate, Pennsylvania

PRAYER: Draw us closer to your heart, so that we might know you better and understand you more completely. We pray that we would not only give things up for Lent but also give you glory through Lent, Lord. May our actions reflect our hearts, and may we worship you through all that we say and do throughout the coming weeks. *Amen.*

New Eyes

Scripture Reading: John 9:1-41

REFLECTION: As it was in the time of Jesus, so it is today. The animosity of religious and ethnic groups toward each other is not new. It is imperative, though, to see through new eyes.

I can relate to the Pharisees only when I see through their eyes, as I can relate to Jesus and His methods of healing and being one with the Father. Through interconnectedness we become fearless and thoughtful beings, understanding our true nature, either choosing light or living in the heavy-laden cloth of antiquity.

My few short years as an Associate within the 200 years of Bon Secours history gives me vision of their historical context. I see how the Sisters live and survive in a deliberate proactive way, expanding in oneness under a plurality of differences.

If my eyes ever were to see Jesus, I think he would be eating a jelly donut, in community with others, while gazing at the Easter fire.

By Lynn E. Moran

Bon Secours Associate, Maryland

PRAYER: With that vision, I offer my prayer for Easter: Lord thank you for the souls you have established to lead us into the future and with your help may we continue to be of service in this your kingdom our home. *Amen.*

People's Division Over Jesus

Scripture Reading: John 7:40-53

REFLECTION: We read today that Jesus was largely not recognized or received by the people of his time. John 1:11 states *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* Many people of Jesus' time pre-judged him as not being the Messiah. They even dismissed him because of the region he was from. Their failing to recognize Jesus has relevance to us in our daily interactions. How often do we pre-judge people based on public opinion, socio-economic status, race, appearance, or any number of superficial attributes that have absolutely nothing to do with their worth as Children of God?

Can we follow the example of Mother Theresa who demonstrated seeing goodness and Godliness in others? Her admirers would ask *“How can you keep serving the poor, the sick, and the dying with such vigor? What's the secret? How do you do it?”* Mother Theresa's answer was surprising and profound. *“Whenever I meet someone in need, it's really just Jesus in his most distressing disguise. Jesus in the child abandoned by the road. Jesus in the beggar hoping for a meal. Jesus in the leper whose limbs have turned to dust. It's Him I help, Him alone.”* What an inspiration and challenge it presents to us to attempt to do likewise!

In another example, Muhammad Ali inscribed this to me inside a book when we met in 1976. His words of wisdom echo Mother Theresa's: *“When we mistreat others, we are certainly mistreating the Artist who created them. If we realized this, it would not be difficult to feel the presence of God everywhere.”*

By Dr. Matthew Silver

Bon Secours Associate, Maryland

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, grant that I might recognize Christ in others. Let my eyes see the Christ in others. Let my ears hear the Christ in others. Let my heart feel the Christ in others. Above all, let me be willing to attend to the needs of others as I would tend to the needs of Christ. This I pray in the Name of Jesus. **Amen.**

The Death of Lazarus

Scripture Reading: John 11:1-45

REFLECTION: Through these weeks of Lent, I am bravely venturing into the dark recesses of my attic. My discipline is to go through as many boxes as I can. The boxes I least want to open are the ones most difficult to reach. They are covered in dust, cobwebs, and are decaying, so that gritty powder sticks to my fingers. Yuck. In these boxes, I find unresolved grief, stifled anger, closed options, decisions I regret, oversight of my flaws, and intense self-examination that leaves no room for my humanity. These are the dark recesses of my stored “stuff.”

Through this Lent, in my attic, I think of Lazarus, and his story keeps me on task. Jesus is not in Bethany when word arrives that his friend Lazarus is dead. By the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus is four days deep in the dark cave. Both Martha and Mary say to Jesus, *“...if you had been here my brother would not have died.”* Loudly Jesus cries out to Lazarus, *“Lazarus come out.”* As Lazarus emerges from the darkness still hindered by his grave wrappings, Jesus says, *“Unbind him and let him go.”* I am Lazarus and Lazarus is me, a follower of Jesus living faithfully with tangled grave wrappings and decay holding me back. Jesus calls me out into the light to release me from what is decaying within me. My accumulated buried stuff does not give life. Jesus calls me to walk out of the darkness and unravel what binds me. Then, I may freely walk with The One who gives life. *Jesus, unbind me for life with you.*

By The Rev. Carol Pinkham Oak, D.Min.

Bon Secours Associate, Maryland & New York

PRAYER: Jesus, unbind me for life with you. Call to me when I am in the darkness. Call to me when I am sealed off from you. Call to me when I see decay and you see life. Stand with the promise of life as I deal with the burdens that hold me back. Stand steadfastly with me as you did for your disciples Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. In your name, The One who gives new life, I pray. **Amen.**

But Jesus Went to the Mount of Olives

Scripture Reading: John 8:1-11

REFLECTION: When the woman caught in adultery was brought before Jesus for judgement, in a mob of scribes and Pharisees, Jesus knelt to the ground to write in the dirt.

There are many lessons within this story, but one particular lesson strikes me. Jesus lowered himself to the ground, making himself small, rather than standing tall against the angry men. He made himself small, just as the woman would have felt while being publicly humiliated.

It's a humbling thought. When we reach a low point, Jesus is with us, experiencing it with us. As I think about this reading and the anniversary of the Sisters of Bon Secours, I can't help but see the connection. For two hundred years, the Sisters have journeyed alongside people during their most difficult moments: illness, poverty, homelessness, etc. A photo comes to mind: Srs. Elaine and Nathalie standing at the US/Mexico border—the sun blazing down—as they talk through the wall with those on the other side. They stood next to the person in need, bearing witness to their challenges. Standing in the hot Texas sun alongside people looking for safety is today's version of Jesus kneeling down in the dirt next to the woman facing execution.

By Tessa Newton, MA

Program Manager, Fundraising, Sisters of Bon Secours, USA

PRAYER: Lord, give me the strength to remain free from judging others. Give me the wisdom to see someone's suffering. Give me the courage to stand in solidarity with the judged. And give me the peace of knowing my presence is important. *Amen.*



The Bronze Snake

Scripture Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

REFLECTION: This passage of scripture from Numbers describes the journey of the people of Israel as they leave Mount Hor by way of the Red Sea and bypass Edom. They are wandering around in the wilderness and getting a bit impatient. There is no water and very little food. The food they do have is “wretched.” So, the people start complaining and whining about God and Moses. It seems their faith in the Lord had wavered due to the difficulty of the journey. God punishes them by sending serpents to bite them, and many die. The people realize their sin and ask Moses to intercede, which he does. However, God does not remove the serpents. Instead, the Lord tells Moses to make a poisonous serpent and put it on a pole. Anyone who looks at it shall live. This “look” involved a look of faith in God to save them. It is rather odd that there are two kinds of serpents in this story. There are bad serpents that bite and kill and there is the good serpent that can save them. To be saved, the people had to look at the “good” serpent and believe.

How often do we, in difficult times, go to God and ask him to fix things? So often I have prayed to God to just remove something unpleasant and difficult from my life. We cannot avoid difficulties (serpents) but we can choose to face those difficulties with faith in our Lord. This passage helps me see that God does not do the hard work of life *for* us. He does it *with* us. We must keep our eyes and hearts on Him.

By Bonnie Talty

Bon Secours Associate, South Carolina

PRAYER: Loving God, thank you for your lovingkindness and blessings that never fails us. Lord, thank you for the difficulties that we face and for helping us to recognize those difficulties as a way of strengthening our faith in You. Help us to focus our attention on the “good” serpent. Lord, bless the Sisters of Bon Secours who have dedicated their lives to caring for the sick and dying and who strengthen our faith through their example. Bless the Associates, that we may likewise share the charism. We pray this trusting and believing in You. *Amen*

Stepping into the Fire

Scripture Reading: Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95

REFLECTION: This passage reminds me of the adage, “Out of the frying pan, into the fire.” The three faithful men were already in trouble when they appeared before King Nebuchadnezzar. He tested their obedience by threatening death by fire. Without hesitation, they chose God over king, faith over intimidation. Most days, I avoid the frying pan and the fire, especially when my beliefs are challenged. I become timid, wondering, “How can I defend a faith, and its established institutions, when I have so many complaints myself?” I have come to accept that being a faithful child of God demands trust and courage. Trust that something more powerful than I am knows the true way; courage to act even when smoke obstructs the way forward. “I don’t know” has become my ultimate prayer of faith. From this place of humility, I ask God to show me what I need to see, tell me what I need to know, and show me where I need to go. I can then step into the fires of life—illness, disappointment, misunderstanding, and others—confident that when I take that bold move, angels appear to protect me, guide me, and preserve me in faithful promise.

By Linda Mastro

Bon Secours Associate, Maryland

PRAYER: God of fire and faith, send your angels to surround me with your protection when the fires of life threaten my ability to stay the course. Show me what I need to see, tell me what I need to know, lead me where I need to go, and, by my example, help others to see your saving power and unflinching goodness. *Amen.*

The Silent Space Between...

Scripture Reading: Genesis 17:3-9

REFLECTION: The French composer Claude Debussy said, “*Music is the space between the notes.*” I wonder what to call the space between words and sentences, between our hopes, prayers and “good work?” Silence, as precious space, births, nurtures and strengthens our creative work; in music, language, stories, our beliefs, being, and feelings – faith, hope and love.

The age-old adage, “*silence is golden*” reminds us that momentary pauses and setbacks in life serve to focus and often redirect us. These challenging times in our lives are there to treasure. They call us to listen with intention to Our Heavenly Father with our eyes, our ears and our heart. They are like pure gold, an oh so precious metal, birthed by a collision of stars, gravitational waves and light, which ripple in space and time, ultimately existing in earth’s depths and veins of rocks. Our burdens are gifts to prepare, strengthen and to fortify each of us. Like Abraham and Sarah, we must come just as we are – old, young, feeble, childless, homeless, sick, defeated, disabled; knowing our life’s circumstances do not keep us from God’s plan and good will for our lives.

Our Heavenly Father had been silent for Abraham for quite a while, but in time God speaks to him as only God can. Abraham fell on his face, answering God in a humble gesture and expression of submission, spoken in silence, reverberating through generations and across many cultures. God highlighted the fact that Abraham’s and Sarah’s old age did not matter. God had spoken. Abraham listened. He would keep God’s covenant and become the ancestor of a multitude of nations.

By Dr. Debra Jervay-Pendergrass
Bon Secours Associate, Maryland

PRAYER: Oh, Lord God Almighty, thank you for fortifying our faith, hope and love and for gifting us silence in deprivation, hardship, suffering and pain. May we be filled with joy in the midst of life’s storms and walk your path with gratitude, holding you near in our silent life moments as we listen intently for your heavenly guidance. **Amen.**

There Are None So Blind As Those That Will Not See

Scripture Reading: John 10:31-42

REFLECTION: Near the end of Jesus’ life, some Jewish people are threatening to stone him because he states he is the Messiah. Jesus’ heart must have ached with their unbelief. He wanted more than anything for God’s chosen people to believe.

The Jewish people had been waiting many years for the Messiah. They knew the prophecies and many had witnessed Jesus’ many good works and miracles. Yet, they were blinded to the truth. He was filled with so much love for them, even in their unbelief. He was about to die for them. We cannot imagine His despair. He departed this area and went to the Jordan where John had baptized many. There, he was received with kindness.

I realized that, though I have always known that unbelief broke the heart of Jesus, I have not understood the depth of his pain. This has strengthened my love, appreciation, and empathy for Jesus. I wonder how often my doubt and fear have contributed to His broken heart. May we always be mindful of the unfathomable sacrifice He made for us and how very much it cost.

The verse regarding the Jordan River is quite poignant for me. Recently, I had the privilege to fulfill a lifelong dream and visit the site of Jesus’ baptism. As I contemplate the scene of the believers welcoming Jesus there, I recall the serenity of the place, envisioning His baptism, and the indescribable feeling of His love and forgiveness. I was one with those who welcomed Him.

By Susan Breslin
Bon Secours Associate, Maryland

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, may we keep our eyes, hearts, and minds open. May we focus on the price of the precious gift of forgiveness you offer us through your Son, Jesus. Let us not grieve Your Holy Spirit by our doubt, but believe in you, our awesome and gracious Father, and strive to share this sacred gift of faith with others. May we be the “Jordan” to others in need as we demonstrate your divine mercy and love by our lives. We pray in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, **Amen.**

A New Dwelling Place

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 37:21-28

REFLECTION: ... *they shall be my people, and I will be their God.* (Ezek. 37: 23b)

Troubles and loss in our world can overwhelm. How easily we slip into forgetting we belong to God and we are God's people. Ezekiel reminds us there is a God who loves us and who desires to be our God. We do not face troubles and loss alone.

Josephine Potel remembered this foundation of our faith. In a time of great trouble and loss, Josephine responded from a place of recognizing that she was both known by God and that she was part of God's people. Each founding sister who made the decision to join Josephine in the work echoed and amplified this response. Through compassionate care of the sick they proclaimed: There is a God who loves us and desires to be our God – and we are part of God's people. Each sister who has followed in the footsteps of the founding 12 magnifies this trust and faith in God and God's faith and trust in God's people.

Together, they have led and lead others in the Church to begin to see how women, as part of God's people, are not only called to ministry, but also called to voice and live out their discerned response to God's call. Creating a community centered in compassionate care of the sick and most vulnerable is a direct response to God's Word: *My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* (Ezek. 37:27)

By Shannon Curran

Director, Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry

PRAYER: Compassionate God, Please guide us to live as your people, oriented to you, and creatively honoring how you dwell within us and between us. *Amen.*



Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:1-11

REFLECTION: This passage deals with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Jesus sent his disciples into the city to obtain a colt for his entry into the city. He always delegated responsibilities to them. He chose to ride a donkey portraying his meekness and humility. The disciples placed their coats on the colt and put Jesus on it to ride into the city. This was an offer of padding since the colt was unbroken and without a saddle. Jesus rides into Jerusalem as a humble King of peace. Entering on a donkey symbolizes the arrival in peace, instead of on a horse as a war-waging king. Much as the Sisters of Bon Secours maintain peace in what they do. As the crowd, who was following Jesus went, they cried "Hosanna, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord: Hosanna in the Highest." The Sisters of Bon Secours commit to being protectors of God's gifts and advocate to end violence in all forms. To cry out against human trafficking and promote integrity of the environment and ecological health. They are committed to justice with the poor, the suffering and those most in need.

By Joyce McCracken

Bon Secours Associate, Maryland

PRAYER: "All hold up their palm branches. God be with you. And also with you. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give God thanks and praise. It is right to praise you, Almighty God, for the acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord."
Amen.

The Tempting Snare of Agendas

Scripture Reading: John 12:1-11

REFLECTION: In today's passage, an act of extravagant love and devotion is offset by cynical commentary from the "peanut gallery" gathered around Jesus. It is easy, unfortunately, to be side-tracked from Jesus' mission of compassion, healing and liberation by political, overly-pragmatic or deceptively self-serving agendas, such as Judas exhibits in this moment. Mary's spontaneous overflow of love for Jesus as he prepares emotionally for his arrest, trial and death, a precious moment of intimacy, is harshly interrupted by Judas' interjection. Sometimes we can say or do the wrong thing for what we think are all the right reasons, letting judgment and criticism carry the day, rather than attend to the needs of the moment by being fully present at the level of our heart. This story resonates with the emphasis in Bon Secours of the ministry of presence. It is a reminder for us to be mindfully aware each moment of opportunities to offer compassion when it is needed, to hold space for another's suffering, even if it disrupts our schedule or previous plans or agendas. May we love generously, spontaneously, simply, like Mary.

By Amy Kulesa

Bon Secours Associate and Director of Bon Secours Associates, USA

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, give us the grace to be extravagant lovers, not nit-picking fault finders. May our hearts be gentle and humble. Help us relinquish our agendas in favor of the Holy Spirit's call for us to respond in new ways to the need of the moment. *Amen.*

Betrayal and Forgiveness

Scripture Readings: John 13:21-33, 36-38

REFLECTION: What a powerful reading. Imagine the sorrow that Jesus experienced. What were His thoughts and feelings as He shared this intimate meal with His closest hand-picked friends? How did He get through the meal knowing of the immediate future betrayals?

How His spirit must have been broken especially at a time He would need the love and support. How could He call out his friends letting them know they would betray Him? What feelings were they experiencing during this time?

Yet some of us have experienced betrayals. Have we been able to forgive them? Maybe the pain still feels too great but is it worth your energy to not let it go? Don't let it drain your spirit. Some of us have betrayed people. Have we asked for forgiveness? Maybe it is time to do this for peace of ourselves and for those we have hurt.

By Marie Truffer

Bon Secours Associate, Maryland

Administrative Assistant, Bon Secours Associates, retired

PRAYER: Dear God, Give me an understanding heart. Give me a gentle heart, a forgiving heart. Open my heart and mind so I can let go of the pain. Let me ask forgiveness of anyone I have betrayed. May I strive to live in the true spirit of Bon Secours of compassion, justice, healing. **Amen.**

God Opens the Servant's Ear and Gives Him Words to Share

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9

REFLECTION: This scripture speaks to how when you grow in knowledge of the ways of the Lord, we learn more, and the more we know, the better we can serve him. This scripture compares how Jesus did not lash out at his persecutors. He kept his faith that God the Father would vindicate him and reward him with everlasting life. We have times or situations in our lives that are challenging, where we feel condemned, rejected, or persecuted. It is important in these difficult times that we embrace the teachings of the Lord and stay faithful to His calling. In doing this, we don't lash out, but we take on the responsibility of becoming the teacher of what we have learned through our actions and reactions.

By Kathy Scarnaty

Office Coordinator, Bon Secours Associate Office, USA

PRAYER: When I remember that God tolerates and forgives the smelliness of my own faults and failings, I am more ready to accept what I find disdainful in others. The more I know my own great need for the embrace of a merciful, forgiving God, the more I can be forgiving and be merciful to those who wound me. **Amen.**



Invited to Love All Perfectly

Scripture Reading: John 13:1-15

REFLECTION: Our Lord Jesus loved his own at all times! However, aware that his earthly ministry was coming to the end, he practically and perfectly expressed his LOVE for his apostles - regardless of what he knew about each of them, including for his traitor (v.11), another who would deny him three times and those who would desert him. With all inexpressible humility, the Lord and Master (v.14) went low and washed the feet of his apostles, traditionally a task done by house servants. The Lord and Master became a servant! In this we see Jesus' perfect love and compassion for all people. He challenges and invites us to learn from him (v.15).

By Fr. Matthias Jjooga
Bon Secours Associate, Uganda

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank you for choosing to remain with us sacramentally, especially in the Eucharist. At the institution of this Eucharist you perfectly expressed your love for us all. May you inspire us to live this love and go out to serve all people with compassion. *Amen.*



Suffering Is Never For Nothing

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 52:13–53:12

REFLECTION: As I think about that first Good Friday and read scriptural text, we know this day was one marred by unimaginable violence in the act of the crucifixion, unfathomable grief as those who loved Jesus watched and felt powerless to intercede on His behalf, hopes dashed, with major disappointments as the disciples probably experienced an array of emotions and felt directionless with the death of their leader and friend. As a result of the events on that Good Friday, I am certain that for the followers of Jesus, His mother Mary, the disciples who were AWOL, for the exception of John, the “Beloved Disciple”, and the women who followed Jesus that embodied compassion and servanthood, they failed to see the “good” on this Friday.

Not unlike our response when we are met with the storms of adversities, seasons of suffering, be it physical, emotional, relational, or financial. What remains true for that first Good Friday and remains true for us when we are wronged, persecuted, experiencing seasons of grief and loss, asking those “why” questions, is that as author Amberly Neese shares in *Untangling Faith: Reclaiming Hope In The Questions Jesus Asked*, “God is good. Period.” Good Friday is our example, that whatever God allows in our life, it will always be for our greater good and His glory. The Good Friday journey reminds us that “Suffering Is Never For Nothing.” Without Good Friday, there would not be a Resurrection Sunday morning, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the birth of the Church.

By Rev. Dr. Brenda A. Nelson

Bon Secours Associate and Program Coordinator, Associate Office, USA

PRAYER: O Lord Jesus Christ, who finished the work that you were sent to do, enable us by your Holy Spirit to be faithful to our call. Grant us strength to bear our crosses and endure our sufferings, even unto death. Enable us to live and love so faithfully that we also become good news to the world, joining your witness, O Christ, in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

(Source: www.reformedworship.org)

Remember, and Trust

Scripture Reading: Matthew 27:45–66

REFLECTION: As a child I often wondered why I should remember to do my assigned house chores, homework, and the like. Reflecting back on this question, I now realize practice helped me to cultivate a certain discipline to details. Practice trained my mind to be able to recall the details necessary to respond appropriately. Remembering certain things takes time for the mind to process, except for tragic events, like the death of a loved one. Emotions force us to struggle with trust. Trust is highlighted in 2 Corinthians 4:6–10, 16–18. The reminder to always carry in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies, and to not lose heart, speaks of trust. Retracing during Lent and Holy Week the details of Jesus’ life, death, and burial, today we are given the space to stand still...to pause a little while with grief and loss. We ponder the compassion and ultimate suffering of Jesus so they are embedded in our spirit. Trust is the pathway to hope.

Through the grieving process, we need good news—it will lead us to trusting God’s Word, because hope is near. When we read verse 63 of Matthew—the chief priests and Pharisees recall Jesus’ comment on rising on the third day—we hear the good news, and the message to always remember that through suffering comes hope. Jesus’ death was not the end of the story—Remember and Trust.

By Ms. Minta Davis

Bon Secours Associate, Maryland

PRAYER: Most loving God of Grace we thank you for reminding us to trust your Words that Jesus spoke, help us to keep our hearts open to receive the good news of hope by remembering your love for us. **Amen.**

Alarmed! Amazed! Alleluia?

Scripture Reading: Mark 16:1-7

REFLECTION: Easter! After our Lenten fasting from “alleluias!”, an arduous Holy Week journey to Jerusalem and the darkness of death on a cross, it’s finally time to celebrate! Alleluia! “Alleluia!” wasn’t the reaction of the women who were brave enough to venture to Jesus’ grave, however. After all, their lives had been turned upside down, and Jesus’ friends were grieving. Along the way to Jesus’ tomb, their focus turned to practical concerns: how would they remove the heavy stone door at the tomb’s entrance? But these women were not going to be deterred by a closed door. The harder task would be to wash, anoint and wrap Jesus’ body. When they arrived, their prayers were answered—the stone was already rolled away! Their astonishment quickly turned to alarm, as they came to the entrance. They could see that Jesus was gone, but the tomb wasn’t exactly empty. They were amazed to be greeted by a mysterious “man in white” who proclaimed, “Fear not! Jesus is Risen. Go . . . tell this news to the disciples and Peter!”

If you read ahead to verse 8, the women didn’t immediately follow the man’s instructions. They *fled* the tomb—very much afraid—and didn’t tell anyone! Sometimes, it takes a while for the alleluias to come, but that’s okay. In spite of their fear, those faithful women most certainly found the courage to ignite a flame that would cross continents, oceans and time, to spread the good news of Christ’s resurrection to you and me.

+ Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen indeed, Alleluia! +

By Rev. Dan Kirkpatrick

Bon Secours Associate, South Carolina

PRAYER: God of resurrection. Help us to move from alarm to amazement! Bring us hope through Jesus’ resurrection and courage to *be* alleluias in a fearful world. *Amen.*



The Resurrection Changes Everything

The Book of Acts

REFLECTION: During the Easter season, we proclaim in our church communities that “Jesus is Risen. He is Risen, indeed!” This proclamation is made over the whole creation. We believe and proclaim that Jesus’ death and resurrection have given each of us the hope of unending life in the presence of God, starting in this present moment. And the renewal of Springtime life bursting forth in nature is something that we can also soak into our spirits, just as we enter the Easter season. The penance and somber self-reflection of Lent, and the interiority of winter, give way to illumination, lightness of being and joy. The great gift of Christ’s Resurrection is that death and sadness will never again have the last word. When we share the good news, that “Jesus is Risen,” we are proclaiming to a hurting world that Jesus’ finished work on the Cross and his Resurrection, are God’s way of saying that love, hope, renewal and peace are always possible and will eventually, always, prevail. Joining our will with God’s in faith, we can say to injustice, death, loss, grief, war and human sin and selfishness, that Jesus is Risen, Love is Lord of all, and the Resurrection is the last word in this day and hour to all that might discourage us. Let us plant this lively seed of Faith and Hope in deep soil within our hearts, so that it bursts forth in our spirits and manifests in Love, just as Jesus emerged victorious from the tomb.

By Amy Kulesa

Bon Secours Associate and Director, Bon Secours Associates, USA

PRAYER: Loving and renewing God, help us to keep the beautiful reality of Jesus’ Resurrection in the forefront of our minds and hearts each and every day. Grant us the grace to trust that New Life in the Risen Christ has the last word over every circumstance, memory and relationship. Let us trust that You are always doing a new thing. You are Risen, indeed. **Amen.**





© Sisters of Bon Secours, USA 2024