

MANRESA MATTERS

Spring/Summer 2022

Some believed, others still doubted



Our Mission is to help men and women grow spiritually through prayer, reflection, guidance and teaching according to the Ignatian tradition.

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FROM THE

Editor



JOANN AMICANGELO
Publications
Coordinator

WHEN THE PUBLICATIONS TEAM AGREED ON THE THEME OF DOUBT FOR THIS ISSUE, I WAS CONFIDENT IT WOULD

BE A great topic. We came to it after a lively discussion around the cultural and societal trends in 2021 that included, among others, a higher level of anxiety due to the pandemic and resulting uncertainties throughout the world.

We knew that trying times and high anxiety often lead to questions of faith: Where is God in all this? Why doesn't He put an end to our suffering? How do we persevere in our faith in times like these? Our hope was that we could address the tension that exists between doubt and faith, the opportunity doubt offers for personal and spiritual growth, and the grace that exists in the doubt.

In October, as I plotted the editorial content and looked for writers, I started to have my doubts that I could bring the team's ideas to life. No joke! Somewhere in the process, I lost my sense of direction and the self-confidence I needed to find my way back. Add to that the sudden loss of my sister in late December and I was knee deep in a thick muck of sadness and despair that made every attempt to move forward seem impossible.

I had no choice but to ask for God's help to get moving again.

That help came through the very articles that you will read in this issue. I gained strength from Kathy Mills' story of healing through the prayers of a loving community as well as courage from Joe Pavlov's steadfast faith in the midst of his own heartbreaking losses. Hearing how Beverly Lanni exchanged her self-doubts for the assurance of God's unconditional love and how Madeline Bialecki surrendered her losses at the foot of the cross empowered me to do the same. I was reminded that I wasn't alone in my struggles as Scripture came alive through reflections by Paul Seibold, Amy Kennedy and Fr. Fennessy, and of the importance of patience and prayer through the words of Sergio Pagés, Theresa Kukawka and Grace Seroka.

As I write this, I'm confident that choosing this theme was as timely as it was necessary – for me and for you. Whether you feel like you're treading in the waters of despair or walking on mountain tops of joy, I think you'll be inspired to persevere, to dig deeper for answers that give meaning to your experiences, and to wait expectantly for God's loving arms to pull you closer to His heart.

On the journey with you,

JoAnn Amicangelo

Team Effort



Manresa's Publication Team works together to develop each issue of Manresa Matters. Pictured here reviewing an early draft of this issue are (from left to right): Paul Seibold, Sr. Linda Sevcik, SM, Fr. Bob Ytsen, SJ, Grace Seroka, Steve Raymond, JoAnn Amicangelo and Hugh Buchanan.

QUOTES

Think about it

"In our "fallen" world, doubting God is a normal part of our human existence. We need not be ashamed if we have our doubts; God can handle them! But we need to be able to articulate them and by doing so, we can even grow to a greater intimacy with God."

~ Msgr. John Zenz

"Doubt is but another element of faith."

~ St. Augustine

"Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith. They keep it awake and moving."

~ Frederick Buechner

Viewed positively, doubt provides opportunities for spiritual growth. It tests your faith, and shows you where it is vulnerable. It forces you to think about your faith, and not just take it for granted. It stimulates you to strengthen the foundations of your relationship with God."

~ Alistair McGrath

"For people to grow in faith, they need the freedom to take tentative steps. They need to trust that their questions will be met with gentleness. It's when doubt is met with mercy that faith expands."

~ Jesus Film Project

FROM THE

Executive Director

How Doubt is Essential to Faith



SR. LINDA SEVCIK, SM
Executive Director

I entered the Marist Sisters right after high school and lived with other Marist Sisters near Marygrove College in Detroit as a postulant while completing my freshman year there. It was a wonderful opportunity for me, living in a large city for the first time, meeting many people from outside my home state of West Virginia, plus living in a community of the Congregation I felt called to.

We learned at Marygrove to research and write papers during the year, and were encouraged to choose topics that interested us from any field. I chose "The Role of Doubt in Faith" as one of my first efforts because I was experiencing a lot of questioning, including about my faith that I was raised in. What I learned opened my mind and shaped my thinking a great deal.

For this column, I am re-visiting that early topic, although the actual paper is long gone, amid all the changes of location I've experienced in religious life.

Theologian Paul Tillich, in his book *The Courage to Be*, sums up much of what I realized: "Doubt isn't the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith." He encouraged me to see doubt as a gift that can ultimately allow God to deepen our faith, not as something to avoid. Doubt and questioning can lead to new insights. In our Christian tradition, saints speak of the reality of Dark Nights of the Soul that draw people to greater spiritual maturity. Possibly you will note examples of that in this issue.

If you are struggling with doubts about your faith these days, be encouraged by this quote from Pope Francis, our companion on the journey of faith:

"Who among us has not experienced insecurity, loss and even doubts on their journey of faith? ... We've all experienced this, myself as well. It is part of the journey of faith, it is part of our life." – Pope Francis, General Audience of Oct. 30, 2013

God Bless,

Sr. Linda Sevcik, SM

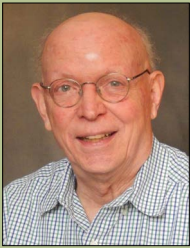
“
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God bless the doubters

By Paul Seibold

Read Mt. 28:1-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Mt. 28:16-17



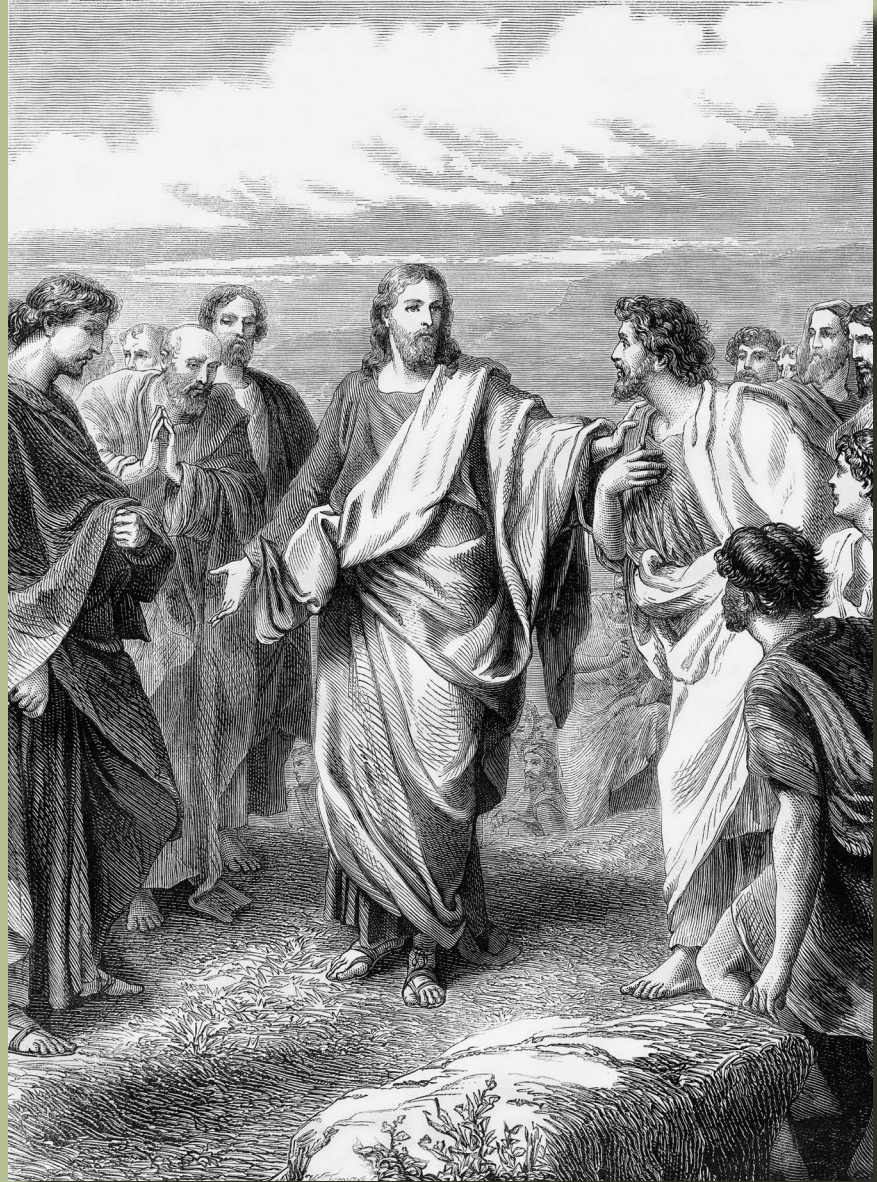
DOUBTED? IF WE ENTER THAT scene, as Ignatius encourages us to do, we would be standing with the disciples before the risen Lord. Certainly

we recognize Him, Whom we beheld only days before: there's no mistaking Him! And certainly we know what happened to Him in the meantime and recall what He had foretold about it.

What a perfect gift to these men, and yearned for by Christians from then to now: "If only I could have seen Him at that moment, I would need nothing more." But for some of the disciples, even that wasn't enough.

What, exactly, were they doubting? The Lord before their very eyes? The details of the wounds, to be doubted again by Thomas? The lessons of their past three years? Where events would lead from here? Whatever their specifics, these doubts affirm the disciples' humanity: they were vain, impulsive, stubborn, weak-willed and clueless. Scripture doesn't say, but one can well imagine, in the manner of Ignatius, how many face-palms our Lord must have made over them. In their failings and foibles, they were just like us!

Nevertheless, the disciples had gone to the place designated by the Lord, understanding, from the



two Marys, only that "there they will see me." (Mt. 28:10) And as He regarded them on that Galilean mountain, Jesus knew what was in their hearts.

The last verses in the Gospel of Matthew are known as the Great Commission: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...." (v 19). Jesus emptied the eleven of their doubts, supplying instead all the resources they would require for their outreach to the world. His

trusting direction awakened their trust in themselves, empowering them to partner with Him.

May His trust overwhelm our doubts as well! †

Paul Seibold is a Manresa volunteer who serves on the Publications Team and assists with event photos. An Army retiree, he and his musician wife, Pat, enjoy following the progress of their daughter, So-Jin, and son-in-law, Kevin, and their growing family in Chicago.

How a caring community turned my doubts into hope



Above: Seventy two people gathered at Kathy Mills' home to thank God for His healing power in her life. Right: Kathy with her beloved sons, Rob and Dan.

By Kathy Mills



CHRISTMAS DAY, 2020. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN CELEBRATING THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

Instead, in an emergency room at Beaumont Hospital, I'd just learned I had ovarian cancer.

Naively, I thought my faith would pull me through.

Home for a few days before surgery, "what ifs" crept into my thoughts. I thanked God for my blessings but couldn't help wondering if He was giving me these few days to prepare for the end. COVID restrictions ruled. I longed to be with family and friends. Spur of the moment, I invited whoever was available to join me, January 2, 2021, on my front lawn.

Twenty-four friends appeared – including colleagues from my St. Thomas More Choir! With masks on and in falling snow, we formed a wide circle and sang "Silent Night." Voices echoed in the stillness and my eyes filled with tears. I was not alone. Then, the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done." Fear choked me. Could I accept God's will?

Facing so much unknown, I wanted others to join me on my pilgrimage. Instead of Christmas cards, I created a CaringBridge® site and invited friends to journey with me. I knew I would draw strength from them, and it would help fill the void of being alone. What I didn't know is that I'd spend 50 days in the hospital.

My darkest moment came in February, after emergency surgery. Hooked up to all sorts of devices, I thought of Jesus and His Passion. I shared my sin and hopelessness on CaringBridge. I said I didn't know what or how to pray

anymore.

Immediately, encouraging responses

flooded my box. One in particular, "You don't have to pray, Kathy. We're praying for you."

A few days after being released from the hospital, thoughts of chemo overwhelmed me. Once again, I reached out to friends. On March 14, 2021, cars lined the street. Sixty people filled my driveway! Strong voices warmed the cold air as we prayed, then sang "Jerusalem, My Destiny." The words said it all, "This journey is our destiny. Let no one walk alone." God was amid my friends. My hope was renewed.

While my faith slipped a few times between March and September, it became easier to grab hold. Then in September, the long-awaited news. My CT scan report said, "No evidence of disease"!

I had a burning desire to thank God publicly. On October 3, 2021, 72 faith-filled friends joined me for a third gathering. The theme was "God's Promises," from a prayer card my husband received before he died seven years earlier. No tears were denied during our closing song, "I Will Be with You." What started as a rainy, umbrellas-up event ended in sunshine and a rainbow. Thank You, God. †

Kathy Mills thanks God daily for her two sons, family and friends, many from Manresa. Their faith and commitment to prayer carried her through her toughest storm. Kathy's greatest desire now is to be open to God's will in her life.



Leaving my losses at the foot of the cross

By Madeline Bialecki



IN THE EARLY 1980s, WHILE WORKING AT UNIVERSITY LUTHERAN CHURCH AT the University of Pennsylvania, I had the opportunity to go on a Palm Sunday weekend retreat with the Taizé brothers from Hell's Kitchen, New York City. I felt privileged to be among this group of pilgrims preparing for Holy Week. The retreat house was in rural Maryland, and

signs of spring were all around us.

The small chapel where the brothers led us in Taizé prayer services was dominated by a large wooden cross, and we were invited to meditate on the cross.

I remember sitting in front of the cross on Saturday afternoon and imagining the scene on the day Jesus died. I imagined Jesus' mother and Mary Magdalene (my patron saint) at the foot of the cross, overcome with sorrow, crying out in anguish. In my imagination, I joined them at the foot of the cross and looked up at the dying Jesus. I gasped at the sight of Jesus in agony.

As I sat with Mary and Mary Magdalene, I joined in their questioning the scene before them. Poor Mary, recalling the prophesy of Simeon that her heart would be pierced. How right he had been!

Poor Mary Magdalene, losing the only man she truly loved, the man who had given her hope and loved her into wholeness.

How could this be? Where was God in all this? How could God abandon Jesus and us?

Even though Jesus had suggested bad things would happen in Jerusalem, we had no idea he meant this

bad. I wondered how I had missed the signs, how I had misinterpreted what Jesus had been saying. How blind I had been, how comfortable in my denial.

As we watched Jesus dying and heard him cry out to God in his abandonment, my heart broke, and I wept along with Mary and Mary Magdalene.

Tears streamed down my face as I thought of the losses in my own life, of times when things did not go as I had hoped, of unmet expectations and crushed dreams. I joined Jesus, Mary and Mary Magdalene in the depths of despair. I questioned God's love and care for me.

And then, one of the Taizé brothers approached me and gently invited me to lay my burdens at the foot of the cross. "Lay them down," he said, "and walk away." He told me to trust that Jesus would take up whatever was weighing me down.

What? Just let go of the hurts I had been carrying around for so long? Let go of those losses that had shaped me? Those painful events that I had survived and carried as a badge of honor?

The brother sensed my hesitancy, my resistance, and reminded me of the Resurrection. God did come through. God is faithful.

By the time we left that retreat house on Sunday afternoon, I felt ready to enter Holy Week, believing that God's love would transform my sorrow into resurrection joy. †

Madeline Bialecki lived most of her adult life in southeast Pennsylvania. She attended Villanova University and worked in nonprofit management for 35 years. She moved to Michigan nine years ago and is currently enrolled in the Internship in Ignation Spirituality at Manresa.

MY STORY

Trusting in the goodness of God

God is good

By Joe Pavlov



**I ONLY KNOW
THREE THINGS FOR
sure. God is good.
He has a plan. And
I can't figure Him
out!**

No matter what happens, God can make something good come out of it, and my family and I sure learned that the hard way this past year.

In June, we lost our most precious daughter, Jennifer Marie, 37, to a very freak lawn mowing accident. A licensed chiropractor with her own thriving practice, she had a reputation as a healer after only a few years in the business. She was also the mother of seven children aged 13 to four months old, and she was the spark plug that kept our family always up and going. In a word, she was beautiful both inside and out.

She left a void that we are all trying to fill and probably never will. We had five children and they have given us 17 grandchildren. Todd, her husband, is the youngest from a family of 11 children. It is amazing how these two families are pulling together to support each other, especially her four young babies under the age of five.

The love, prayers and support from the community have been incredible!

**I only know
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It has been very humbling for me to learn the impact our daughter had on so many people. I am even writing a book about her so her four youngest children can learn about their mother when they're older.

In December, I attended a very special St. Clair County Right to Life (SCCRTL) meeting honoring the author of life Himself, Jesus Christ. It was beautiful with soft lighting, background music, great food (pot luck, always the best) and a nativity scene with figures made of olive wood carved in the Holy Land. It was a magical evening with nearly 80 people attending.

Somehow the majority of SCCRTL's board of directors contracted the Coronavirus. I was the first, and it hit me the hardest. While everyone else recovered quickly, especially my wife, Marilyn, I was laid low for over a month. Following that, I developed pneumonia.

As of this writing, I still have some residual pneumonia and must see a respiratory specialist. I can truthfully say this is the sickest I have ever been in my entire life. I am very thankful for all the prayers, love and chicken soup that were sent to speed my healing. I am most grateful to Marilyn for taking such good care in keeping me alive.

There was more sorrow to come. In January my brother, John, passed away from the virus and two types of pneumonia, while my sister, Teri, was hospitalized with pneumonia. This, while my youngest sister, Eileen, tended to her family in Las Vegas who had Covid and other illnesses.

I know one more thing for sure: God can bring good out of all of our suffering. Still, I am hopeful for a better 2022. †

Joe Pavlov is a retired high school English, speech and drama teacher and currently serves as president of SCCRTL. He and Marilyn have been married for 48 years and love to travel the country in their motorhome. Joe has attended 45 retreats at Manresa.

The Doubt of Joseph

By Fr. Peter Fennessy, SJ

“Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.” (Mt 1:18-19)



BUT JOSEPH DID MARRY MARY once an angel assured him in a dream that she was innocent. Paintings of this event are titled *The Dream of St. Joseph*, but our painting is the exception.

Since Joseph is awake, it's called *The Doubt of St. Joseph*. But the story is ambiguous enough that we too should have doubts—about its meaning.

The painting depicts a middle-class home. On the left a pregnant Mary winds yarn. Around her, besides Joseph's workbench and tools, are symbols of her virginity: a sealed water fountain and a shrub protected by a crenelated pot. And there are books representing the prophets, especially Isaiah who foresaw the virgin birth of Christ. On the other side Joseph has grabbed his walking stick in dismay and set his feet to storm out of the house. But an angel stops him, pointing to Mary and proclaiming her innocence.

So, our painter implies that Joseph believed Mary guilty of adultery. A hymn to Mary written in 626 AD describes his feelings:

“Looking on thee, O Unwedded One, and dreading a hidden wedlock, O Sinless One, the chaste Joseph was riven in mind with a storm of doubt.”

And a Middle-English mystery play, *Joseph's Doubt*, written

between 1450 and 1500, portrays Joseph angrily accusing Mary of adultery until God sets him right.

Other people understand the text differently. Joseph, they say, found out that Mary “was with child through the Holy Spirit.” He was a “righteous” man, one who keeps the Law, so had he thought Mary guilty of adultery, he would in obedience to the Law have to accuse her publicly. Rather, knowing her virtue and that the Messiah would be born of a virgin, Joseph believed her, but he thought himself unworthy of being involved in so great a mystery. And he was fearful of that involvement too, not angry at a betrayal. The angel told him not to be *afraid* and assured him that his involvement wasn't an accident. He had been specifically chosen to give Jesus His name and raise Him as his own.

There's also a third opinion. In the second-century apocryphal *Gospel of James*, Joseph laments that he had failed to protect Mary's virginity. When she insists she's innocent and says she doesn't know how she became pregnant,

“Joseph was greatly afraid, and retired from her, and considered what he should do in regard to her. And Joseph said: If I conceal her sin, I find myself fighting against the law of the Lord; and if I expose her to the sons of Israel, I am afraid lest that which is in her be from an angel.”



Upper Rhenish Master, *The Doubt of St. Joseph*, Museum of the Oeuvre Notre-Dame, Strasbourg.

He couldn't believe her unfaithful, nor understand how she could become pregnant otherwise. In his doubt he suspended his judgment, but still thought of backing out of the marriage.

The Eastern Churches rarely depict even Joseph's dream, but their *Icon of the Nativity* typically includes Satan in a bottom corner disguised as a shepherd who tempts Joseph to doubt Mary's virginity. Joseph is troubled but resists the temptation.

So, Joseph may have had doubts: about Mary's fidelity, or his own worthiness or the whole

REFLECTION

The Pace of God

By Grace Seroka



DO YOU WONDER WHERE GOD HAS BEEN THESE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS? HOW AND WHERE DID GOD STEP

into the global pandemic caused by the Coronavirus? Did we lose one or two years of life? Much of life came to a standstill; did God, too? Or did God wait to be discovered? Where was He found?

I listened to the Old Testament readings this past year with a heart seeking wisdom from the past. How did they handle crises? Ancient cultures were challenged with unrest, uprooted villages and communities, and a longing for God to intervene. They had leaders, young and old, with vision, hope and courage. What boggled my mind was the length of time that passed before new communities were forged, freedoms were realized and wars were won. Often this was a span of 40, 100 or even 1,000 years! I sat wondering when COVID-19 and all of its variants would pass. Will we recognize a new landscape? Is God taking His time while we figure out the meaning of ours?

As the world became quiet, I sensed God stepping into the stillness and meeting us there. For some, God was discovered outdoors. In the loneliness of isolation, God was found as a companioning presence. The effort to breathe under a mask left many grateful for life-giving air. Many dug deep into their reservoir of courage and went to the front lines to physically care for the sick. God was found wherever people were, with His abundant grace to forge on.

I am left pondering God's pace. So many prayers, rosaries and novenas all asking God to intervene. Make haste, Lord! May science solve the mystery? May life and its movements emerge again? May we gather, celebrate, mourn and share our lives? How soon and at what pace is God answering these questions?

As I write this, it is spring 2021. The grass has grown with our lush greenhouse weather, and I am biting at the bit to mow the lawn. In all of my eagerness and gusto with the outdoor yard work, I deeply sprained a muscle. Six weeks of rest is required. "Life in moderation." This is a new standstill in time and a new perspective on pace. For one who believes that life is about movement, I am learning the grace of resting.

Keeping still, pausing, breathing fully, listening and simply being are great ways to be present to God. God's pace is now, in this moment. When Mary pondered Simeon's words to her in the temple, she held them within her in prayer, allowing God to transform her to be one with Him. God's communion with us is the time of healing and transformation to the extent we are open to receive His presence.

In many ways God is in the dance of life with us. His movements are in rhythm with ours — leading, swaying, turning and springing. His pace is inviting and encompassing with His natural creation, cleansing us with rain, lifting us in the strong winds. He caresses us with His breeze, rippling and rowing with us on the water and pausing with awe over a field of blue flax bending to the wind.

All of life is in harmony with a natural and divine rhythm — God's pace — and we are one with Him in its movement. It is filled with dramatic moments, deep quiet intervals, thresholds of change, new growth and a hope for tomorrow filled with God's presence.†

Grace Seroka completed the Internship in Ignatian Spirituality and the Spiritual Exercises at Manresa. She served in campus ministry at Notre Dame Prep Marist Academy, taught Christian Yoga at Manresa for 16 years and currently volunteers in spiritual care at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Pontiac. Grace co-facilitates Manresa's Outdoor Meditations.



situation. And we may have doubts about the meaning of the text and about much else as well. Undoubtedly, someday all will be made clear.†

Fr. Peter Fennessy is serving his second term as superior of the Jesuit Community at Manresa. He is Coordinator of Individually Directed Retreats, and among other duties, manages our book store. Since studying Theology and Art and Buddhist Aesthetics during a sabbatical year at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA, he uses fine arts to illustrate his preached retreats.

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How I opened my heart to God's love



By Beverly Lanni



DOUBT AND I HAVE BEEN LIFETIME

companions. I've doubted myself and my abilities as well as others and their intentions.

My biggest doubt in life has been how God could ever love me. I had made too many mistakes, too many wrong turns and decisions, and had unintentionally hurt too many people.

Growing up in a church with rules and laws, my image of God was one of a distant and uninterested yet relentless judge demanding very high standards. I prayed my prayers, attended Mass and tried hard to do good works and deeds to please Him. I knew in my head that God loved me, but not in my heart. I bought into the false narratives that I am what I do and I am what others say about me, which often made me feel that I was just not good enough.

For a brief while, I became involved with prayer groups, but when family tragedies occurred, I closed the door to God and began a long period of

time during which I was going through the motions — surviving but not really living life. I did not believe God could help, and I was too busy, hurt, angry and resentful to ask for God's help. Self-sufficiency, not God, ruled my life.

On an Inner Healing Retreat at Manresa, it was suggested I go sit by the empty tomb on the grounds. It was sitting there that the story of Lazarus in John 11 spoke to me. I was reminded of Jesus' words, "Roll away the stone," and "Lazarus, come out" (John 11: 38, 43). My heart had become much like that hard stone, except it was not rolled away. The doors to my heart were locked, bolted and boarded up. Behind the doors were all the pain-filled, unprocessed moments. There was the hurt of a child who was angry at God for allowing her dad to be in a wheelchair as a result of polio, as well as anger from so many disappointments, losses and hurts.

Gradually, with the help of meetings with a spiritual companion, reading, time in prayer and participating in Manresa classes, the doors began to open, and I began to experience the loving, healing care of Jesus. "May the eyes of your heart be enlightened" (Ephesians 1:18).

This journey has not been easy, but it has brought an inner freedom I have never known. By God's grace I've come to see and understand events and people in my life with a new perspective and can draw valuable lessons from all I've experienced. I no longer see the stamp of "not quite good enough" but rather one that reads beloved, adopted daughter of God. And though I still fall down, I can now get back up, knowing that a loving God is always with me, urging me to trust and believe more and more in Him.

Checking those heart doors on a regular basis is now part of my spiritual journey, for it is only with an open heart that I can experience the fullness of Jesus' love. Doubt, my lifelong companion, is being replaced with hope. †

Beverly Lanni is married and the mom of two grown sons. A retired teacher, Beverly enjoys reading, walking or hiking in nature and spending time with friends and family. A spiritual companion, Beverly recently completed Manresa's Internship in Spiritual Companionship.

Facing my doubts with the help of Examen



*The view of El Avila Mountain from the Pagés' family home in Caracas, Venezuela.
La vista del El Ávila desde el apartamento de la familia Pagés en Caracas, Venezuela.*

By Sergio Pagés



MY HABIT OF PRAYING THE EXAMEN EACH DAY HAS PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN my spiritual growth over the years. It is especially helpful as I face difficulties in my life or struggle with doubts from time to time. As I pray and reflect on my day, I write in my journal what I am grateful for as well as my daily struggles. This allows me to gain a better perspective on what's going on in my life. It reminds me that God is using whatever I am facing to labor with me and for me.

This was especially true upon the loss of my father, Juan Enrique Pagés, who died at the age of 85 last February in Caracas, Venezuela. As difficult as it has been to mourn his passing, through my prayer and reflection I am filled with gratitude for the relationship I had with my father and for the many ways God was involved in bringing us closer together during his last days.

For example, I am grateful that I was able to get a flight to Venezuela quickly after my brother, Juan Claudio, called about my father's deteriorating health. This travel was a major ordeal due to the pandemic restrictions and to the diplomatic issues between the US and Venezuela.

I am deeply grateful for the special times I was able to have with my father during his life. He'd had two close calls with death, battling heart attacks in 1987 and in 2015. Those close calls woke us both up to the finitude of our lives, and I began to treasure my visits with him so much that, when it was time for me to leave, I would often break down in uncontrollable tears and could not properly say goodbye to him.

One year we met in Barcelona and he shared with me some of the most intimate experiences of his life. When he learned how much I wanted to go to the town of Manresa, he was happy to accompany me there and to visit the mountain of Montserrat.

Prior to my return to Caracas for my father's final days, I phoned him and we talked about El Avila Mountain, which he could see from his bed. I was prompted to send him a poem by the Brazilian philosopher Leonardo Boff. The poem personifies a mountain that is scorched by the sun, punished by the rain and enveloped in mist, yet it doesn't complain about these things. It doesn't worry about being noticed or get angry when stepped on, as the poem relates: "That is why the mountain is a sacrament of God: it reveals, remembers, alludes, liberates."

Though he told me he'd read the poem, he never gave me any feedback about it. I wondered if he'd understood why I'd sent it and, more generally, where he was in his relationship with God.

Just before he died my niece, Sofia, interviewed my father, asking him questions about his life, while my nephew, Felipe, filmed the interview with a cell phone.

In his answers, I hear a man who is at peace with himself and God. His challenges and trials now seemed to him small in comparison to the many blessings in his life. He was especially grateful for us, his family. "I feel very fortunate to have lived a long life and been given my family," he said.

He also said that his view of El Avila Mountain had been an inspiration to him. I took that to mean he had understood the meaning of the poem and that, in his own

way, he shared my spirituality and had been much more contemplative than I'd thought. I was able to see with more clarity that God had been involved in our relationship all along and that He was shaping us both through our individual and shared experiences.

Though he is gone from this world and I miss him dearly, my father

continues to speak into my life as the Lord uses his final words to shape my thoughts and affirm his love for me. †

Sergio Pagés graduated from Manresa's Internship in Ignatian Spirituality in 2011 and served on Manresa's Board of Directors. He gives the Spiritual Exercises and has led several workshops on Ignatian Spirituality in both Spanish and English.



Sergio with his father at Manresa Jesuit Retreat House in 2017.

Sergio con su padre Juan en la Casa de Retiros Jesuitas de Manresa en 2017.

REFLEXIÓN

Enfrentando mis dudas con la ayuda del Examen

MI HÁBITO DE REZAR EL EXAMEN CADA DÍA HA JUGADO UN

papel clave en mi crecimiento espiritual a lo largo de los años. Es especialmente útil cuando enfrente dificultades en mi vida o lucho con dudas de vez en cuando. Mientras rezo y reflexiono sobre mi día, escribo en mi diario aquello por lo que estoy agradecido y mis luchas diarias. Esto me permite obtener una mejor perspectiva de lo que está pasando en mi vida. Me recuerda que Dios está usando todo lo que estoy enfrentando para trabajar conmigo y para mí.

Esto fue especialmente cierto en la pérdida de mi padre, Juan Enrique Pagés, quien murió a la edad de 85 años en febrero pasado en Caracas, Venezuela. A pesar de lo difícil que ha sido mi duelo por su fallecimiento, a través de mi oración y reflexión, estoy lleno de gratitud por la relación que tuve con mi padre y por las muchas formas en que Dios estuvo involucrado para acercarnos más durante sus últimos días.

Por ejemplo, estoy agradecido de haber podido tomar un vuelo a Venezuela rápidamente después de que mi hermano Juan Claudio me llamara por el deterioro de su salud. Este viaje fue un gran logro debido a las restricciones de la pandemia y a los problemas diplomáticos entre EE. UU. y Venezuela.

Estoy sumamente agradecido por los momentos especiales que pude tener con mi padre durante su vida. El estuvo dos veces cerca de su muerte, luchando contra ataques cardíacos en 1987 y en el 2015. Esos momentos de crisis nos despertaron a ambos a la finitud

de nuestras vidas, y comencé a atesorar tanto mis visitas con él que, cuando llegaba el momento para irme, a menudo rompía en lágrimas incontrolables y no podía despedirme de él apropiadamente.

Un año nos encontramos en Barcelona y compartió conmigo algunas de las experiencias más íntimas de su vida. Cuando supo las muchas ganas que tenía de ir al pueblo de Manresa, se alegró de acompañarme hasta allí y visitar la montaña de Montserrat.

Antes de regresar a Caracas en sus últimos días de vida, lo llamé y hablamos sobre la montaña El Ávila, que podía ver desde su cama. Esta conversación me motivó a enviarle un poema del filósofo brasileño Leonardo Boff. El poema personifica una montaña abrasada por el sol, castigada por la lluvia y envuelta en niebla, que no se queja de estas cosas. No le preocupa hacerse notar ni enfadarse cuando la pisan, como relata el poema: Por eso la montaña es sacramento de Dios: revela, recuerda, alude, libera.

Aunque me dijo que había leído el poema, nunca me dió ningún comentario al respecto. Yo me preguntaba si había entendido por qué se lo había enviado y en términos más generales, dónde estaba él en su relación con Dios.

Justo antes de morir, mi sobrina Sofia entrevistó a mi padre haciéndole preguntas sobre su vida, mientras mi sobrino Felipe filmaba la entrevista con un celular.

En sus respuestas, escuché a un hombre que estaba en paz consigo mismo y con Dios. Sus desafíos

y pruebas ahora le parecían pequeños en comparación con las muchas bendiciones en su vida. Estaba especialmente agradecido por nosotros, su familia. "Me siento muy afortunado de haber vivido una vida larga y haber tenido a mi familia", dijo.

También dijo que el ver la montaña El Ávila había sido una inspiración para él; supuse que eso significaba que había entendido el significado del poema y que, a su manera, compartía mi espiritualidad y había sido mucho más contemplativo de lo que pensaba. Pude ver con más claridad que Dios había estado involucrado en nuestra relación todo el tiempo y que nos estaba moldeando a través de nuestras experiencias individuales y compartidas.

Aunque se ha ido de este mundo y lo extraño mucho, mi padre me continúa hablando en mi vida y el Señor utiliza estas últimas palabras para darle forma a mis pensamientos y afirmar su amor por mí. †

Sergio Pagés se graduó en el Internado de Espiritualidad Ignaciana de Manresa en 2011 y fue miembro de la Junta Directiva de Manresa. El Imparte los Ejercicios Espirituales y ha dirigido varios talleres sobre Espiritualidad Ignaciana tanto en español como en inglés.

Do your best and leave the rest to God



By Theresa Kukawka



ONE OF MY FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT THE BIBLE IS THAT IT IS FILLED WITH human beings fraught with doubt and weakness. I can relate to them. Indeed, we all struggle, question, live in uncertainty. We all need faith to carry on, to surrender, to trust that all will be well.

I find it difficult navigating my own life, but making decisions that might have unintended consequences for my children's lives is my heaviest burden. Laurie Frankel's book, *This Is How It Always Is*, includes a dialogue that illustrates the magnitude of doubt that weighs on me. The following is a conversation between a husband (H) and wife (W) struggling to make a big decision:

(W) If xyz were the right thing to do, wouldn't we know it?

(H) When was the last time something was bothering one of the kids or one was acting strange and wasn't doing well in school and we knew WHY and HOW TO FIX IT?

(W) Never.

(H) Not ever, not once. You NEVER know. You only guess. This is how it always is. You have to make these huge decisions on behalf of your kids. This young kid, whose fate and future is entirely in your hands. Who trusts you to know what is good and right and to make that happen. You never have enough

information. You don't get to see the future. And if you screw up with your incomplete, contradictory information and make the wrong call, well... nothing less than your child's entire future and happiness is at stake. It's impossible. It's heartbreaking. It's maddening. But there is no alternative.

Doubt has weighed most heavily on me when deciding, for example, whether or not to send my daughter to the Regnum Christi school in Rhode Island, take my son to the emergency room, get our youngest vaccinated, tell Molly she should break up with Mack and insist my son take his medication. I can tell you that I have failed, greatly and repeatedly.

One thing that has helped me is tweaking my nightly Examen. Instead of scrutinizing the day in a way that makes me keenly aware of all my failures (e.g., I failed to listen attentively, help with homework, prepare a nutritious dinner, offer encouragement), I ask myself one question: Did I offer my best? If the answer is "yes," that is enough.

Just like the Drummer Boy, offering my best is the best I can do. Do your best and leave the rest to God. For God can be trusted. Or as Thomas Merton wrote when he was preparing to enter the monastery, "I had done everything in my power. The rest was in God's hands."[†]

Theresa Kukawka is happily married, a mother of six incredible children and a retreat director. She is currently enrolled in Manresa's Internship in Spiritual Companionship.

Doubt paves the road to deeper faith

By Amy Fryar Kennedy



SOMETIMES WE TRY TO HIDE OUR

doubts, but I am convinced that God can use doubt to nudge us to a deeper faith. Ignatius encouraged us

to notice our reactions each day. When we can't embrace a teaching wholeheartedly, what if we pay attention with an open mind and trust that God might have new truths for us?

When we doubt, we are in good company. Let's look to the Bible: we'll find many doubters there.

The writers of the Psalms often struggled with questions and doubt. Psalm 22 asks: "My God! My God, why have you left me all alone?" After admitting his questions, the psalmist reminded himself: "You are the holy one... Our ancestors trusted you... they cried out to you and they were saved; they trusted you and they weren't ashamed."

Jesus himself must have doubted. In Matthew 5, Jesus says, "**You have heard that it was said**, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' **But I say to you** that you must not oppose those who want to hurt you." He goes on, "**You have heard that it was said**, 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' **But I say to you**, love your enemies and pray for those who harass you so that you will be acting as children of your Father who is in heaven..." [Bold emphasis is my own.] When Jesus sensed something was lacking in the teachings handed down to Him, he pondered those things and then offered richer wisdom to His disciples.

How did Jesus handle doubt expressed by others? In John 20, Thomas was skeptical when his friends reported seeing Jesus alive after the Crucifixion. "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands ... and put my hand into his side, I won't believe." When they were reunited, Jesus didn't scold Thomas. Jesus' first words were,



"Peace be with you." Then he said, "Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side." Jesus offered peace to this doubter and invited him to come closer and see for himself. Witnessing Jesus' wounds, Thomas uttered, "My Lord and my God!"

I am familiar with doubt in my own life. I grew up in a Baptist church where the Bible was taken literally. I'm no longer comfortable with that attitude, but I didn't abandon the Bible. I take the Bible seriously, but I approach it differently now. Gospel contemplation helps me meet Jesus in the stories there. I look for patterns in how Jesus interacts with people

instead of dissecting every word. *Lectio divina* helps me ask what fresh words of ancient wisdom God has for me today. Midrash helps me to imagine elements of the story that are not included in the text.

My understanding of God isn't perfect, but I keep trying. Instead of having certainty, I walk humbly with God, remembering Ignatius' invitation to learn from my mistakes. May it be so.†

Amy Fryar Kennedy is the Minister of Congregational Care at First United Methodist Church in Ann Arbor. She is currently enrolled in the Internship in Spiritual Companionship at Manresa.

2022 CONFERENCE RETREAT SCHEDULE

Retreats for Men



Apr. 1-3

WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: Blessed Francis Page, SJ]
Grand Rapids/Metamora; St. Ignatius of Loyola; Wyandotte/Downriver
DIRECTOR: Sr. Linda Sevcik, SM

Apr. 8-10

PALM SUNDAY WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: St. Gabriel Lalemant, SJ]
Traverse City DIRECTOR: Fr. Bob Ytsen, SJ

Apr. 22-24

WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: St. Peter Canisius, SJ] John Lau; St. Frances Cabrini K of C; St. Hugo DIRECTOR: Fr. Peter Fennessy, SJ

Apr. 29-May 1

WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: Our Lady of the Way] Brother Rice Alumni; Detroit Police & Fire Fighters; Gaylord; Gesu, Detroit; Men of Manresa; Mt. Pleasant; St. Mary Magdalen/St. Conrad DIRECTORS: Fr. Fran Daly, SJ & Sr. Kathie Budesky, IHM

Aug. 5-7

WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN in RECOVERY

[PATRON: Fr. Jack Schuett, SJ] DIRECTOR: Mr. Terry Sullivan NOTE: \$50 non-refundable, non-transferable deposit required.

Aug. 26-28

WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: St. Stephen Pongrácz, SJ] St. Bede; Leonard Stumm; The 12 Steppers DIRECTOR: Fr. Peter Fennessy, SJ

Sept. 9-11

WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: Blessed Sebastian Kimura, SJ] McDonald/McHardy; St. Mary of the Hills; Serra of Oakland County; Shrine-Reichenbach DIRECTOR: Fr. Bob Ytsen, SJ

Sept. 30-Oct 2

WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: St. Francis Borgia, SJ] Berry Group; Feuerstein; K of C Detroit Archdiocese; Maher; St. Anthony, Temperance; St. Elizabeth, Tecumseh; St. Louise DIRECTOR: Fr. Robert Flack, SJ

Oct. 6-9 (Th-Su)

4-DAY RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: St. John Ogilvie, SJ]
Weisenburger-Serra DIRECTOR: Fr. Robert Scullin, SJ

Oct. 21-23

WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, SJ] Catholic Lawyers & Physicians; Ford Tractor; Oakland St. Vincent de Paul; St. Robert/Ada/Grand Rapids DIRECTOR: Fr. Bob Ytsen, SJ

Oct. 28-30

WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: St. Stanislaus Kostka, SJ] Bodde-Schweihofer; Our Lady Star of the Sea; St. Clare of Montefalco; St. Francis of Assisi; St. Hubert, Mt. Clemens; St. Joseph, Lake Orion; St. Valerie DIRECTOR: Fr. Steve Hurd, SJ

Nov. 4-6

WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: St. Rupert Mayer, SJ] Ascension; Holy Name, Birmingham; Immaculate Conception, Ira Township; St. Boniface, Oak Harbor, OH; St. Clement, Centerline; SS. Peter and Paul Jesuit Church DIRECTOR: Fr. Joe Wagner, SJ

Dec. 2-4

WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN

[PATRON: St. Francis Xavier, SJ] Bayer, Toledo; Defiance DIRECTOR: Fr. Steve Hurd, SJ

Retreats for Women

May 6-8

MOTHER'S DAY WEEKEND RETREAT for WOMEN IV

[PATRON: Mary, Mother of the Society of Jesus] DIRECTOR: Fr. Robert Flack, SJ

May 27-29

WEEKEND RETREAT for WOMEN in RECOVERY

[PATRON: Fr. Fred, SJ] DIRECTOR: Sr. Karen Jackson, CSC NOTE: \$50 non-refundable, non-transferable deposit required.

June 10-12

WEEKEND RETREAT for AL-ANON WOMEN

[PATRON: Fr. James Cullen, SJ] DIRECTOR: Sr. Karen Jackson, CSC NOTE: \$50 non-refundable, non-transferable deposit required.

June 24-26

WEEKEND RETREAT for WOMEN VI

[PATRON: Sr. Mary Ward, IBVM] DIRECTOR: Fr. Peter Fennessy, SJ

Sept. 13-15 (Tu-Th)

MIDWEEK RETREAT for WOMEN VII

[PATRON: Blessed Francisco Garate, SJ]
DIRECTORS: Fr. Fran Daly, SJ & Sr. Kathie Budesky, IHM

Oct. 13-16 (Th-Sun)

4-DAY RETREAT for WOMEN VIII

[PATRON: St. Dominic Collins, SJ]
DIRECTOR: Sr. Linda Sevcik, SM

Nov. 11-13

WEEKEND RETREAT for WOMEN IX

[PATRON: Blessed Miguel Pro, SJ]
DIRECTOR: Fr. Peter Fennessy, SJ

Nov. 25-27

WEEKEND RETREAT for WOMEN in RECOVERY

[PATRON: Edward Dowling]
DIRECTOR: Fr. Bob Ytsen, SJ NOTE: \$50 non-refundable, non-transferable deposit required.

Retreats for Men & Women



Apr. 14-16 (Th-Sa)

HOLY WEEK RETREAT for MEN and WOMEN

[PATRON: Fr. Pierre Teilard de Chardin, SJ] DIRECTORS: Fr. Fran Daly, SJ & Sr. Kathie Budesky, IHM

May 20-22

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION WEEKEND RETREAT for MEN and WOMEN

[PATRON: Fr. Robert de Nobili, SJ] DIRECTORS: Fr. Leo Cachet, SJ & Ms. DiAnne Schultz NOTE: \$75 non-refundable, non-transferable deposit required.

July 29-31

WEEKEND RETREAT for MARRIED COUPLES

[PATRON: St. Ignatius of Loyola] DIRECTOR: Fr. Bob Ytsen, SJ NOTE: \$100 non-refundable, non-transferable deposit required.

Sept. 2-4

YOGA RETREAT FOR MEN and WOMEN

DIRECTORS: Fr. Leo Cachet, SJ, Ms. Mary Gresens and Ms. DiAnne Schultz NOTE: \$75 non-refundable, non-transferable deposit required.

MILESTONES

Sept. 23-25

WEEKEND HEALING RETREAT for MEN and WOMEN

[PATRON: St. John de Brebeuf, SJ]
DIRECTORS: Fr. John Esper & Ms. Debbie Tourville
NOTE: \$50 non-refundable, non-transferable deposit required.

Retreats for Religious Sisters

Sept. 25-30 (Su-F)

PREACHED RETREAT for RELIGIOUS SISTERS

[PATRON: St. Margaret Mary Alacoque]
DIRECTORS: Fr. Peter Fennesy, SJ & Sr. Linda Sevcik, SM

Individually Directed Retreats for Men & Women

May 10-19 — IDR Session I

June 13-22 — IDR Session II

July 18-27 — IDR Session III

Aug 10-19 — IDR Session IV

“In-session” dates allow for eight-day retreats as well as retreats of shorter duration (four-day minimum). Arrival time begins at 5:00 PM on the opening date of the retreat session, dinner is at 6:00 PM and the retreat itself begins at 7:30 PM. The retreat ends at 10:00 AM on the closing date of the retreat session. Alternately, individuals may choose “out-of-session” dates for individually directed retreats between September and April each year.

The “in-session” cost is \$80 per day with an \$80 non-refundable, non-transferable deposit. “Out-of-session” costs are \$85 per day with an \$85 non-refundable, non-transferable deposit. For summer session retreats of four to eight days you may register online (click on “Individually Directed Retreats”) or call 248.644.4933 Ext. 0 for an application.

To register for a retreat, click on the retreat name or call 248.644.4933 Ext. 0.

Retreatant Awards

July — December 2021

Manresa Pin (15 Retreats)

Don Badamo
Burt Kassab
Richard Kollins
James Kozinski
William Walsh

Manresa Crest (25 Retreats)

Daher Jabero
Richard McCrate
Larry McDonald
Mary Stephenson



Manresa Blazer (50 Retreats)

Peter Valente

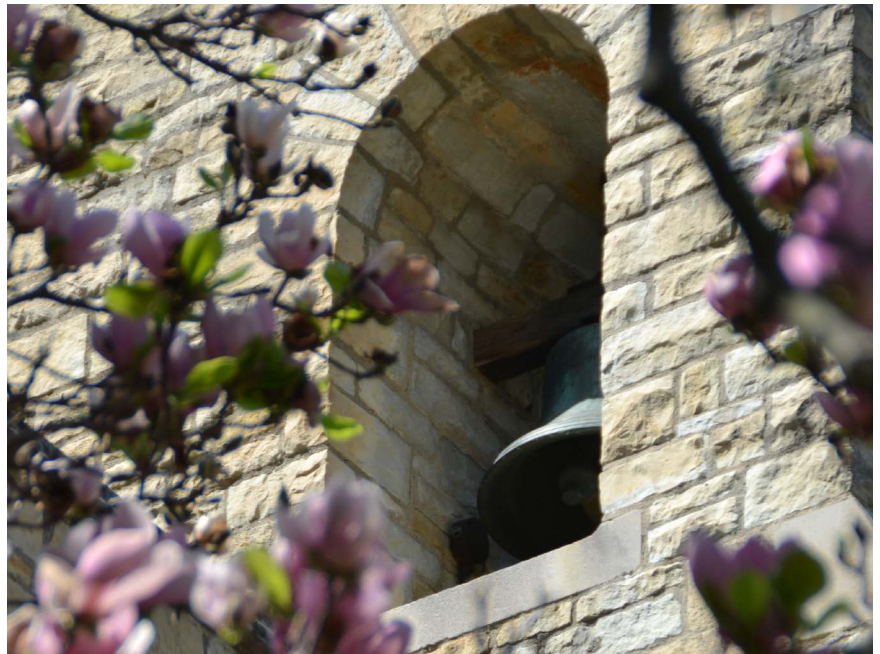
Born into Resurrection

July 1 — December 3, 2021

Eugene Ignasiak, Budd Group, 34 retreats

Kenneth Kozinski, Shrine, 13 retreats

William Winter, 44 retreats



“The beautiful spring came, and when nature resumes her loveliness, the human soul is apt to revive also.”

— Harriet Ann Jacobs



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Coming this fall in *Manresa Matters*

Prayer in the Tradition of Ignatian Spirituality

In keeping with our Mission to help men and women grow spiritually through prayer, reflection, guidance and teaching in the Ignatian tradition, the next issue of *Manresa Matters* considers why we pray and how we pray in that tradition. We will take a look at the various forms of prayer that can help us deepen our relationship with God. Also, we'll address how our Mission is at the heart of our retreats and programs at Manresa.

Pray for the Publications Team as we work together to bring the
 Fall/Winter 2022 issue to life.

If you have suggestions or comments about *Manresa Matters*, feel free to email the editor at jamicangelo@manresa-sj.org.

JOIN US FOR THESE SPECIAL RETREATS AT MANRESA

HOLY WEEK RETREAT Entering the Passion of Jesus



Thursday-Saturday, Apr. 14-16

During this retreat for men and women, we will reflect on the Scriptural texts that focus on the events from Jesus' final meal with His disciples until His last moments on the cross. What did these events mean to Jesus and His beloved companions and what do they have to say to those of us who long to be His disciples today? Register at manresa-sj.org/041422-hwr or phone 248.644.4933 Ext. 0.

Palm Sunday Weekend Retreat for Men
 Friday-Saturday, Apr. 8-10
 Register at manresa-sj.org/040822-psm

Mother's Day Weekend Retreat

Friday-Saturday, May 6-8

Register at manresa-sj.org/050622-mdr



PALM SUNDAY OVERNIGHT Following Jesus in His Passion

Sunday-Monday, Apr. 10-11

Enter into Holy Week with Jesus in the Stations of the Cross. Presentations, personal reflection time, faith sharing and closing prayer service. Register at manresa-sj.org/041022-psw or phone 248.644.4933 Ext. 0.