

## Meeting Our God in the Hectic Activity of Everyday Life

It sounded so basic when it was introduced last year. Who doesn't think of God? But GOD FIRST, above all else? When sufficient reflection was taken, many realized that perhaps this initiative was not going to be as easy as first thought.

Some people embraced the GOD FIRST initiative as an opportunity to re-establish a oneness in their lives — spiritual and temporal as one. It was going to be a jump-start for what was felt as a stagnant journey with God. Some took it to heart only after a period of time. And there were some who didn't even consider it for their lives because they wrongly believed what was being asked might be too exacting or restricting.

Think about it. It is meant to be life-changing. What was done spiritually would definitely make a person think about what is done in the secular society.

### YEAR ONE

Our primary concern last year at this time was the taking what we already knew and providing appropriate understanding according to age and life situation. A few ways of prayer may have been foreign to some, but by-and-large the speakers took the known and attempted to give it greater structure for individuals at various stages in life.

We recall how we were invited to see God first in our lives, our decisions, our acting in response to life, and, hopefully, in how we were allowing God to tell his story of salvation for us.

Scripture was — and remains — a critical part of our initiative. It is **God's story** of how he has revealed himself to his people over and over again — and how this divine revelation continues today for us.

After that, how we began to move with an awareness of this greater gift was suggested. Outreach ministry to the poor and needy was the focus during the second part of last year. "How have I grown in my relationship with God, and allowed that to move me in caring for others as God cares for us?"

All of this remains present to us. Hopefully, we find these ways of greater prayer and greater concern for others continuing to grow in our lives.

Many people continue to seek to make GOD FIRST a more meaningful part of their daily living. They talk about it one-on-one and in the confessional, and of their successes and failures in allowing it to take shape in their responses to God. They sometimes speak of their slowness to respond or lack of understanding they feel necessary to respond.



For some, their response opened them to new and wonderful experiences of seeing and being joined to God in and through their caring for others in need. This aspect of faith —

# GOD FIRST

Year Two, Part 1

*The Prayer of Awareness*

our reaching out beyond our vested interest and those involved with them — remains something that we must grow into more and more, in our own individual responses

and as a community of faith focused on the Lord. It's ongoing growth.

### YEAR TWO

There is no special reading list that we need to plow through in a specific timeframe.

There are no special evenings with special speakers on the calendar.

There is nothing — absolutely nothing — to take us away from the activities of our life.

Sounds almost too good to be true.

Can this be GOD FIRST?

Yes.

There is only one thing for us to learn.

***“The Prayer of Awareness  
of the Presence of God.”***

There's a basic description of GOD FIRST for the next four months on the reverse side of this insert. What will be provided for adults — young and old — will also be provided to our children in our school, CCD, and Youth Ministry programs.

The purpose for this semester is to make this Prayer of Awareness of the Presence of God a real practice that we don't even think about. The prayer, the practice, and God's presence in our lives are to infuse real Life into our everyday life, and allow us to see God revealed wherever we may be.





# GOD FIRST

*Growing in Our Awareness of the Presence of God*

## WHERE LIFE MEETS GOD

### ***NO MEETINGS OR SPECIAL SESSIONS***

To grow in our awareness of the Presence of God does not require us to be present for special meetings or sessions at any time. Some people may choose to begin support groups later on, but these are not an immediate need in most cases. *Spiritual growth without the meetings!*

### ***NO NEED TO CHANGE YOUR SCHEDULE***

To grow in our awareness of the Presence of God does not require that we eliminate activities from our lives, although in some cases it would probably be beneficial for us in all of life.

### ***NO REQUIRED PRAYERS OR TIMES***

Grow in your awareness of the Presence of God while on the fly — sitting in the car, watching TV, waiting for the ballgame to begin, while sharing in an activity. There are no parameters to inhibit this growth other than ourselves.

### ***IN GENERAL...***

*Every person — young and old alike — can grow in the awareness of the Presence of God with very little effort. All that is needed is an individual decision to let God meet us in life.*

## HOW IT WORKS BEGINNING NEXT WEEK

Realize that it is simple!

If you can read a sheet of paper, you've got it made!

In comparison to some of the material we read during the course of a day, this is easy.

**First**, each week an insert — one sheet of paper — will be included in the Sunday bulletin — and also will appear on the parish website — during the course of the next three-to-four months. These will be progressive, in that they will build upon each other for the sake of our expanding our prayer and faith life as the year goes on. So if you're into reading the computer screen rather than the archaic paper, flip up the parish website instead of one of those other connections often made.

**Second**, individually we reflect on how those things presented in the bulletin can be applied to our individual life.

**Third**, focus on this teaching and practice for the next week, allowing it to become part of our life and faith.



### **What is found in the bulletin insert and on the website:**

1) will provide instruction, explanation, and tools meant to help us develop in our own life the amazing *Prayer of Awareness of the Presence of God*;

2) will give us scripture passages to reinforce the whole initiative of our growing awareness of God's presence in our lives;

3) will offer the teachings of Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, a Parisian Carmelite lay brother whose life and influence has made this the foundation for every Christian seeking to develop a more powerful and peaceful prayer life.

# Blindsided by the Totally Unexpected! In Life and in Faith

Rangers.....30

Orioles.....3

True score from a major league baseball game a couple of weeks ago. Most runs scored by a team in 100+ years. If you were a Texas Ranger fan, you probably loved watching every second of the game. If you were a Baltimore Oriole fan, watching was pure agony.

If you are just a baseball fan, it probably became boring and you probably found yourself almost hoping for the Orioles to stage a miraculous comeback to make the game at least a little interesting.

Sorry. It didn't happen.

How is it that one team could be celebrating such a wonderful evening when almost everything was perfect while another team could do little right no matter how hard it tried?

Part of it is luck. Part is skill.

But a lot of it probably came from attitude. As they often say, "Everyone was 'on' during the game," meaning that all the players were focused well, and this attitude ran rampant throughout the whole team. While on the other side of the diamond, little was done right, morale got extremely low, and the effort suffered greatly.

The Rangers will have DVDs made of this night. The Orioles will never want to see it again. The picture was not pretty for them.

**Why is it, that the same thing happens when it comes to people's faith and prayer?** How does one person become on fire while another can't seem to find the Lord anywhere? Part of the reason is that intangible "focus". It is very much an individual attitude or disposition. Another necessary aspect of this phenomenon is the utilization of what has been learned — the application of basic tenants and principles. A third is practice, and a fourth is repetition of these basic principles.

Other variables to be considered include:

What is desired?

Am I looking for fun or fulfillment?

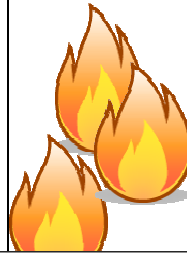
Is structure or spontaneity necessary?

What is the purpose?

Why I am seeking God?

Faith and prayer also, it must be acknowledged, take us from ourselves, moving us to God. When we realize that in this movement, we are also

moving further into ourselves, finding the true identity of our beings (as was/is desired by God). This is fulfilling, freeing, and may even be very joyful. That obviously is left to our own determination, however.



Always needed in this discernment process, and period of understanding is the need to consider how we choose to move — individually, with an another individual person

## GOD FIRST

Year Two, Part 2

*The Prayer of Awareness*

walking the journey with us — a friend, church member, spiritual director, and/or with a support system, an entire group that lifts us up directed by the same desire and goal — a

purpose for our celebrating the Eucharist together.

That's what happened with the Rangers. All the pieces fell in place. They supported each other, and they recalled all that had been shared with them in honing their talents. The ironic fluke was that they went back to playing mediocre ball the next night as they had been doing previously.

In developing a prayer life, and strengthening our faith, we need all of the above-mentioned circumstances. The road is too difficult doing it alone. In learning to place GOD FIRST in our lives, we also need to acknowledge a few facts. So often when we go to prayer we fail to remember these basic tenants and principles.

### 1) God is. Therefore, God does.

"I AM" is more than a statement, a title. It is the very essence of God, and therefore, the action of God. Keeping this in the front of our minds is needed. God is. The word is a name, a title, and an action taking place. God is never not doing — rather, God is always doing. To think otherwise would mean God can stop loving which, according to our faith, is impossible. God is love. God cannot stop being who God is, or if you must, God cannot stop being what God is.

2) All creation is the revelation of God. It's basic to our faith. This does not make a tree God. The tree is created beauty, reflecting the beauty of the creator, the same as a painting reflects the beauty or



*distortion of the soul of the painter. Creation includes us, we who are endowed with the very life of God. We have been given greater dignity than the rest of created nature, given the very life of our God to live and share, becoming one with God. We not only reflect the nature of God, but through our union with God, are provided the ability to be that presence of God for others, not that we become God. Be assured this did not happen because of anything we may think we've done, or do. Rather, it is because of what God has done through Jesus Christ. God has given us that sharing — grace — of his life in love.*

**3) Therefore, our prayer needs to be centered on the reality that the presence of God is everywhere.** *We cannot deny the presence of God in any aspect of life. We cannot hide from it. We cannot run from it.*

***“Where can I go from your spirit?  
from your presence where can I flee?  
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I sink to the nether world, you are  
present there.***

***If I take the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle at the farthest limits of the  
sea,***

***Even there your hand shall guide me,  
and your right hand hold me fast.”***

**Psalm 139: 7-10**

*Therefore, we need to rethink our own spiritual lives before we can appreciate GOD FIRST. We need to analyze our prayer — how we pray, when we pray, why we pray. We must learn the peace-filling “Prayer of Awareness of the Presence of God.”*

*To be able to pray in the presence of God is simple. We can do this anywhere at anytime. To be open to what this prayer provides, or calls us to, requires a bit more work on our part. We are constantly in the presence of God. How do we train ourselves to become increasingly more aware of this presence during our days?*



*The regular practice of this prayer not only allows us to recognize God present to us as we go about our daily chores, work, running the kids to soccer practice, etc., but slowly grows us into the realization that the God in whose presence we sit and stand, is the same God whose presence is in the person we're talking to or talking about. It will require a change in heart and mind. It speaks of:*

- the Truth that is Jesus “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.”*
- the Sacred Heart of Jesus as reflective of the God of love, the complete giving of God.*
- how we understand God loving us and others in a world filled with hatred, bitterness, and destruction.*
- the unexpected awareness of the joy of Jesus even in the most difficult of situations when we feel we're carrying a cross with a sign “Oversized Load” attached to it. (feeling like the Orioles instead of the Rangers.)*

*During the course of the next few months Fr. Bill, Sr. Janet, and Fr. Tom will be providing one-on-one times for those wishing to gain additional insight in the practice of becoming, praying, in the awareness of the presence of God.*

**Consider reading the entirety of the above Psalm (Psalm 139) during the course of this week. How is God's presence realized in what is read and in what is done in our personal life?**



**Previous inserts missed may be acquired at the rectory office or by going to the parish website at:**

**[www.stjohnthebaptistparish.net](http://www.stjohnthebaptistparish.net)**