

Along the way

"Were not our hearts burning within us as he opened the Scriptures for us along the way." — Luke 24:32

A publication of **sabbath retreats** the preaching ministry of Father Lou Papas

Retirement expands horizons closer to home



Sisters of St. Joseph, Rocky River Drive, Cleveland

I remember, as a child, counting the number of days until summer vacation or Christmas, harboring the misguided belief that if I counted off the days, the sought after event would come about more quickly. Regardless of how silly that now sounds, I found myself in recent months, counting the days when I would no longer have to spend far too much time each week in the air and, of necessity, in airports. But that's what happens after traveling virtually every weekend for the last twelve and a half years.

So the time has come! I have informed my bishop in Guyana and Food for the Poor that I will no longer be available full time for the ministry of preaching on behalf of the poor. After a brief break, such assignments within reasonable driving distance will be accepted on a limited basis. But I have other plans for this "retirement."

Elsewhere in this newsletter are details of some of those plans, especially my return to teaching and the pursuit of a more active role in the arts. But since preaching and the Eucharistic celebration will always remain my primary passion, celebrating locally will be a priority.

I will continue to make myself available for weekday celebrations of the Eucharist with the faculty and student body of St. Martin dePorres High School, as well as weekday liturgies with the Sisters of St. Joseph, Cleveland; the Carmelite Sisters in Cleveland Heights; and the retired religious and lay people at the Regina Heath Center in Richfield.

A regular schedule of Sunday liturgies is planned beginning in January with the Sisters of St. Joseph on the first Sunday of the month,



Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity Ursuline Sisters

the Ursuline Sisters at their Motherhouse in Pepper Pike on the second Sunday, and with the residents of the Regina Health Center on the third Sunday of the month. The fourth and fifth Sundays will be set aside for assistance in local parishes and, after Easter, for possible Food for the Poor appeals at parishes within driving distances.

The previous stretches of my life's journey have been blessed with remarkable opportunities for personal growth and exciting challenges. Though retirement will see me closer to home, I fully expect to enjoy those same opportunities and challenges.

My good friend Howard retired the same year I was ordained. He wondered in retirement how he ever had time for work. I hope soon to find out just what he meant by that!



Chapel at the Regina Health Center, Richfield, OH

Homilies move toward publication

Having been encouraged over the years to publish the homilies and the reflections offered on my website, I have begun looking into doing just that. One of the problems that arose almost immediately was the cost of self publishing and the complexity of distribution.

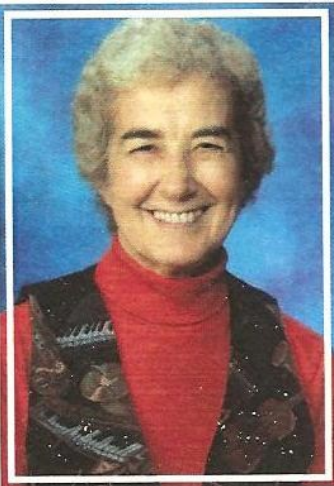
Research revealed that *e-publishing* was a less expensive and, very possibly, more efficient way to proceed. Publishing electronically would allow for viewing the homilies on computers, electronic readers such as Kindle or Nook, as well as on I-phones. An electronic publishing company known as *lulu* offers such an alternative to hard copy publishing.

So the task of re-editing the previously prepared homilies and formatting them for electronic publication has begun. For someone who does not handle the electronic media all that easily, this task will take up a considerable portion of my retirement. *Is anyone out there willing to help? Call me!*

The publication also hopes to feature some of the photographs taken at many of the nearly 600 churches visited during the last twelve and a half years of my preaching ministry. In the prototype to the right, a stained glass window from one of those churches symbolizes the Advent Season and may be used on the cover of the first Advent-Christmas volume of homilies.



Teacher, friend, homily editor remembered



Thelma Gerhart, CSJ

Nearly twenty-five years ago, Sister Thelma Gerhart, CSJ, taught chant to my seminary class at St. Mary Graduate School of Theology here in the Cleveland Diocese. She was a gifted musician and an especially patient teacher with students like me who couldn't hold a tune.

Years later we reconnected when she invited me to celebrate the Eucharist each Friday at her community's motherhouse. Around that same time I began to invite her to join me at Cleveland Orchestra concerts and local theater productions. Our friendship blossomed and became one of the joys of my life. When I began posting homilies on my website, I asked Thelma to be one of the editors of those homilies. She also critiqued the "Sabbath Reflections" that accompanied those postings. Her advice was always right on!

This past summer Thelma became ill, and after several weeks it was discovered that she was suffering from pancreatic cancer. The end came far too soon for all those who loved her. She entered eternal life on August 8. At her wake I admitted that I would miss her calming influence in my life. She was so good at that! And that's probably why I loved her as such a dear mentor and friend. Her memorial booklet quoted Oscar Wilde:

"Life has been your art. You have set yourself to music. Your days are your sonnets."

Preaching schedule of retreats and parish missions

One area of ministry that has brought much satisfaction, in spite of substantial air travel and time away from home, is the preaching of parish missions and retreats. Both provide a great opportunity for pastoral ministry as well as for connecting with Scriptural themes and other religious concepts in greater detail than can be accomplished in a Sunday homily. Though some recent years have had as many a eight to ten such commitments around the country, this coming year there are fewer and closer to home.

Current Parish Mission / Retreat Schedule

December 16-18	Calix AA Retreat	Jesuit Retreat House	Parma, OH
January 1-7	Religious Life: A Cosmic Blessing	Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland	Pepper Pike, OH
February 25-29	Living Sacraments: Being a Sign of What We Believe	St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church	North Adams, MA
March 9, 7:00 pm	The Call to Holiness (Part of the Gesu's Novena of Grace)	Gesu Church	University Hts., OH
March 7, 14, 28	Three Wednesday Lenten Programs: Loving & Forgiving	Regina Health Center	Richfield, OH
March 17-21	Loving and Forgiving: Reconciliation Today	St. Joseph Church	Stuart, FL
Mar 30 - Apr 1	That Man is YOU: Connecting the Story (Men's Retreat)	Jesuit Retreat House	Parma, OH

Bucket list: long-time interests now get attention

The idea of a “bucket list” is something we seniors begin to construct as we look at our dreams and aspirations and put them up against difference between the years that have passed and the years that lie ahead. I have to admit that there is not too much that I haven’t done that I would have hoped to accomplish. But in the “gee, now that would be cool to do” category, I could come up with a few possibilities:

Publish my homilies

Write a book on preaching

Become a spiritual director

Do service volunteering

Visit Paris (again) and England

Take an Alaskan cruise

Go on a bike tour

Take up cross-country skiing

Return to teaching

Take up acting

Study photography/ water coloring

Write a play

Teaching: it's like riding a bike

Last year, hoping to do some part-time teaching in my retirement, I applied to teach English or religious studies at the local community college. In August, I was offered two six-hour sections of Fundamentals of Language II.

The semester just ended, and it was an eye-opener. But that shouldn’t be surprising. Though I had taught this course 28 years ago and to adults in the evening college, these students are, for the most part, recent high school graduates.

Nonetheless, though a considerable challenge, the passion is still there and the classroom skills are very much like riding a bike. And, let’s face it, it’s said that the way to stay young is to stay with the young!

The Spring schedule has me teaching one six-hour section of Fundamentals II and one three-hour course in College Composition I. I’ll have to bide my time till an opening occurs in the Religious Studies Department. I would really like to teach that department’s Religious Experience course.



The beautiful Western Campus of Cuyahoga Community College, Parma, OH.



Looks like a church, but it's the Brecksville Theater on the Square.

Acting debut

My interest (some would say my obsession) with the theater has often led me to scour the audition listings in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, more out of curiosity than anything else since I would never have had time to follow through due to my packed weekend schedule.

A few weeks ago I noticed an interesting call for a “sixty-nine year old” male for a production of Terry Letts’ Tony Award winning play *August: Osage County*. It was scheduled to open in February, so since I was now going to have a freer weekend schedule, I decided to give it a shot.

A couple of days after the auditions the director called and offered me the role of Beverly Watson, the sixty-nine year old former English professor and poet around whose eventual disappearance the play revolves.

This dark, adult comedy about a totally dysfunctional family will be staged at the Brecksville Theater on the Square the first two weekends of February. Stay tuned!



Nativity Window, St. Patrick Church, Oneida, NY

*A Blessed
Christmas
and a
New Year of
Great Promise*

The mystery of Christmas is that the very memory of our God becoming one like us has the power to transform lives. The startling reality is that our God willingly entered our frail and often broken humanity out of an infinite love, a love that holds no conditions, a love freely and abundantly given.

For all the trappings that accompany this sacred day, truth be told, it is a struggling humanity's feeble attempt to respond to a mystery that is too overwhelming. We reach out this season with love and good will so that we can in a small way acknowledge the wonder of the love our God has shown.

*First Christmas Homily, 1988
St. Peter Church, Lorain, OH*