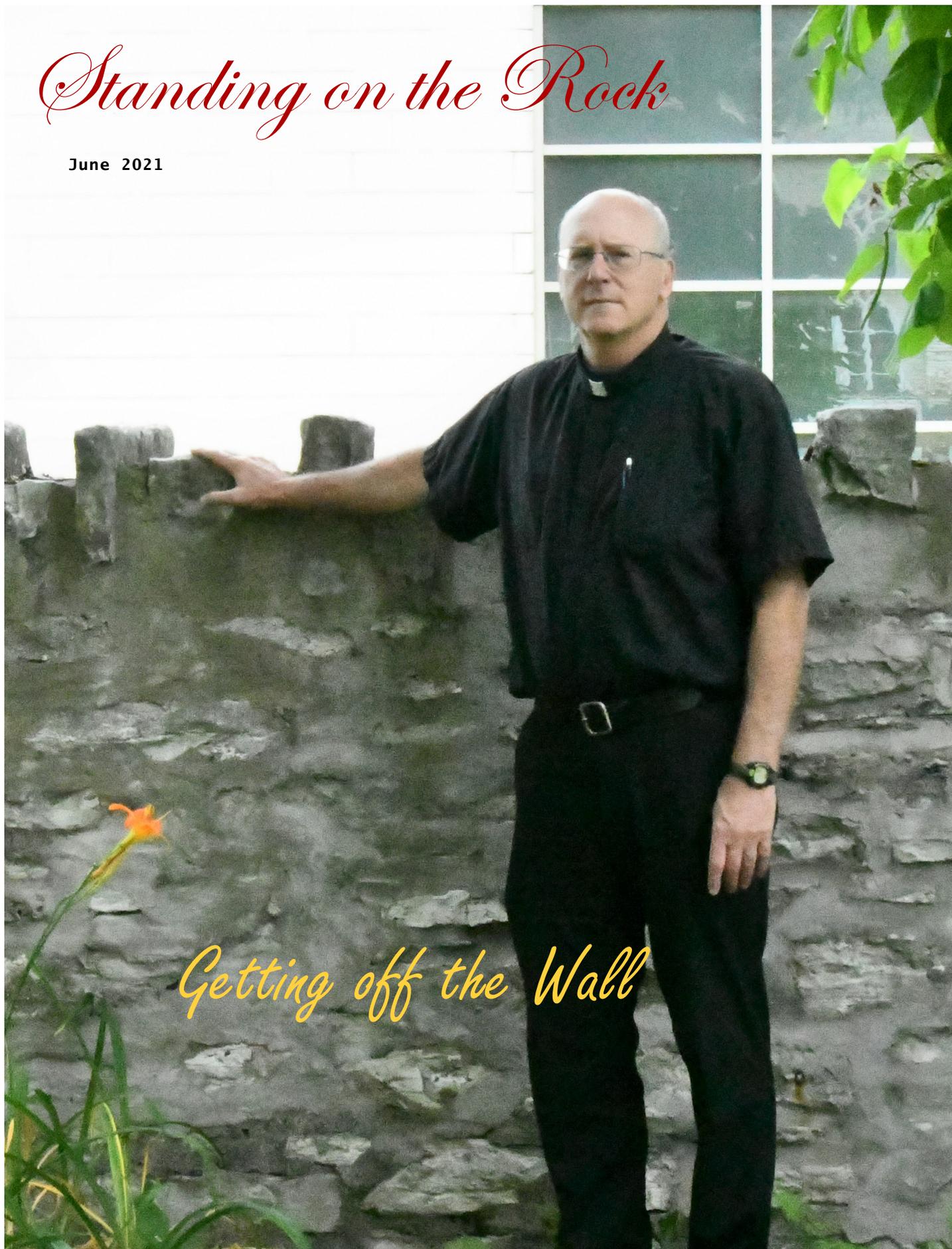
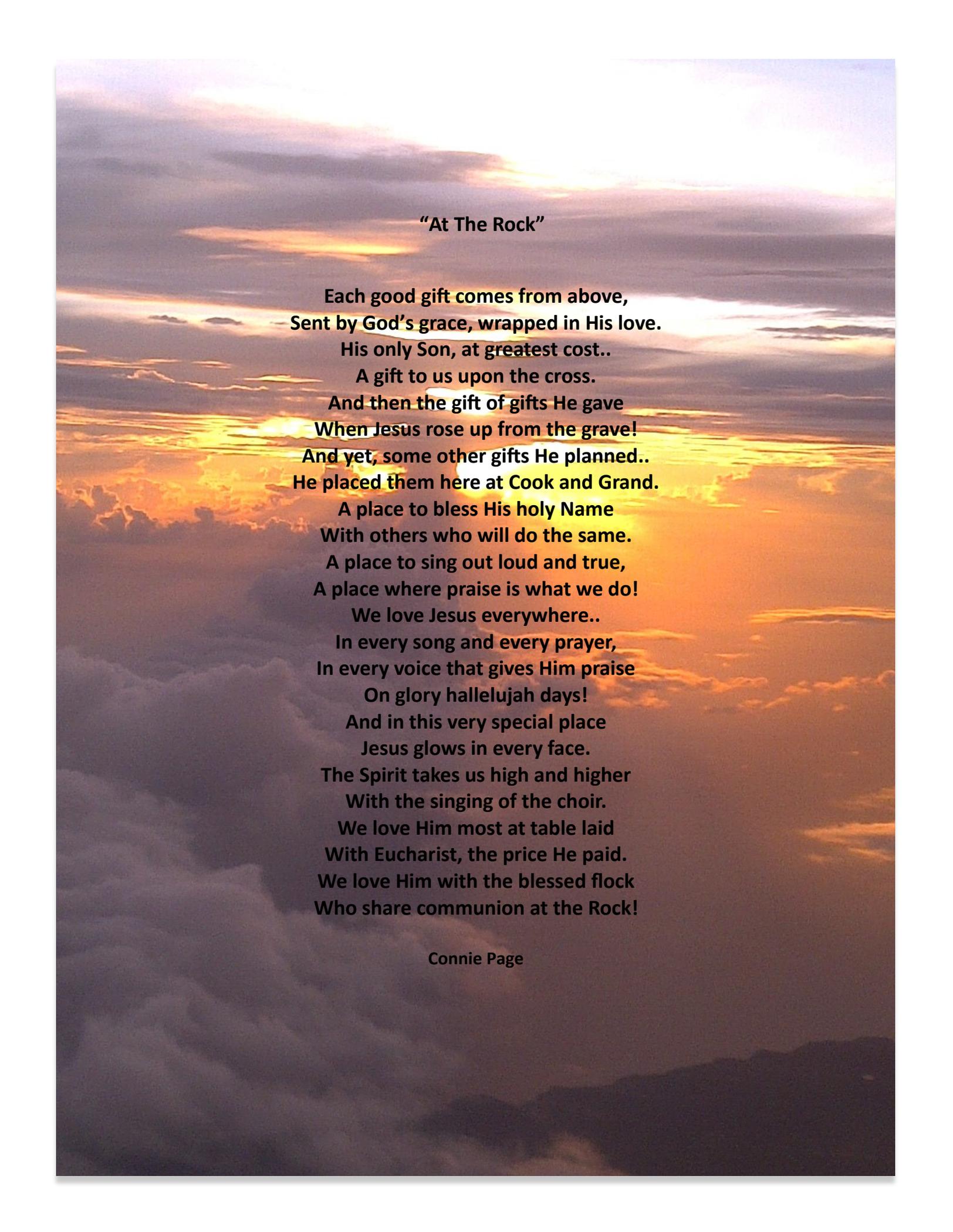


Standing on the Rock

June 2021



Getting off the Wall



“At The Rock”

**Each good gift comes from above,
Sent by God’s grace, wrapped in His love.**

His only Son, at greatest cost..

A gift to us upon the cross.

And then the gift of gifts He gave

When Jesus rose up from the grave!

And yet, some other gifts He planned..

He placed them here at Cook and Grand.

A place to bless His holy Name

With others who will do the same.

A place to sing out loud and true,

A place where praise is what we do!

We love Jesus everywhere..

In every song and every prayer,

In every voice that gives Him praise

On glory hallelujah days!

And in this very special place

Jesus glows in every face.

The Spirit takes us high and higher

With the singing of the choir.

We love Him most at table laid

With Eucharist, the price He paid.

We love Him with the blessed flock

Who share communion at the Rock!

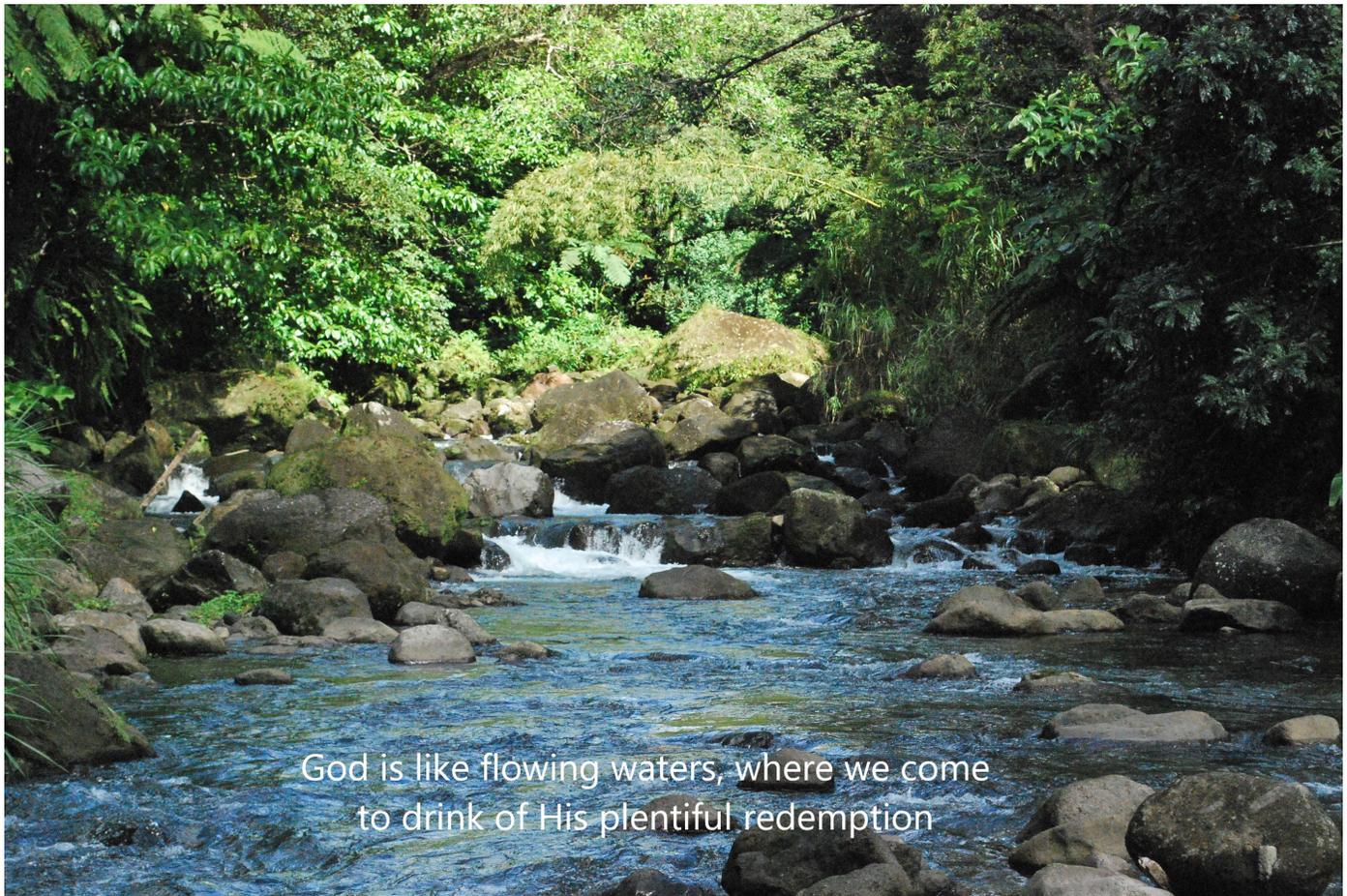
Connie Page

Editorial *Rev. Rodney J. Olive C.Ss.R., co-editor*

Welcome to our first issue of “Standing on the Rock,” a parish magazine, produced and published by St. Alphonsus Liguori “Rock” Catholic Church . As an African-American Catholic Parish, we praise God for his blessing of this culture, and the distinct richness that we bring to Catholic worship and evangelization . Our purpose in producing this publication is to answer the Lord’s call to evangelize and proclaim the Good News within our Catholic Faith.

Our goal is to reach out and share with God’s people, the experiences of what God is empowering us to do in our parish. The focus of “Standing on the Rock” is to share the experience of African-American Catholic spirituality and worship, our pastoral outreach to the St. Louis community, and to the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church as they speak to the social issues facing our community.

Our evangelization outreach helps us to appreciate and praise God for the rich diversity of our own Rock Church Family. We come together to experience the power of God’s love in our own personal lives, as well as in the life of our church family. Together with the Redemptorist Missionaries, who have been with us from the beginning, we extend our welcome to anyone who wants the opportunity to experience God, through the fellowship and worship of our faith community.



God is like flowing waters, where we come
to drink of His plentiful redemption

WHAT IS THIS “PERPETUAL HELP SHRINE”?



In this debut edition of “STANDING ON THE ROCK”, we thought we’d review the history of our beautiful Mother of Perpetual Help shrine. In subsequent issues we will feature our Mother and we welcome any suggestions or personal experiences readers have had and would like to share.

Her history dates all the way back to 1867 when then Pope Pius 9th had entrusted the icon of Mary as the Mother of Perpetual Help to the Redemptorists. The icon was held among believers to be miraculous. The command given the Redemptorists by Pius 9th was “Make Her Known to the World”. Six years later, 1873, the Redemptorists dedicated her shrine in the newly constructed church of St. Alphonsus Liguori in St. Louis, which during its construction had become fondly known as THE ROCK CHURCH!

The first public devotion in homage to her under this title was held on December 7, 1873. It was just a beginning; a seed planted into the fertile soil of faith and devotion which would grow and blossom to the point that she has actually become known to the entire world.

Countless parishes within the archdiocese of St. Louis have regular Perpetual Help devotions, and the same can be said of countless countries of the world. Wherever Redemptorists have set foot, there one will find the familiar icon and the equally blessed faithful carrying on her devotions.

MaryEllen Judge



The History of Black Catholicism

What is Black Catholicism? African American practicing Catholicism. "Black Catholicism or African American Catholicism comprises the African American people, beliefs and practices in the Catholic Church."

When I began this project, I said "this is too much, there is so much information, where do I begin?" I began to think about my journey as a Catholic. I was born in Tennessee, my mother and her sister moved to St Louis, Missouri. I remember going to the Most Holy Rosary Catholic Church, and School. My aunt also converted, she felt that she could advance economically, educationally, and most of all spiritually. The majority of my family is Baptist, and AME (African Methodist Episcopal). We exist together, although we attend different congregations we all serve God. .

As is well known the common teaching on slavery was officially corrected by the Second Vatican Council in 1965: Whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torture inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as sub-human living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children... all these things and others like them are infamous. They poison human society, dishonor the Creator, and do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury...

Human institutions, private or public, must serve man's ends and minister to his dignity. They should be bulwarks against any kind of political or social slavery and guardians of basic rights under any kind of government...

As Black Catholics we bring our heritage of preaching, music and dancing to worship God. The Catholic Church had a tradition of a single mass. After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Just two weeks later, on April 16, Father Herman Porter, a black priest from Rockford, Illinois, convened the first meeting of the Black Catholic Cler-

gy Caucus in Detroit Michigan. Fifty-eight black priests gathered with at least one Brother and woman religious (or "Sister") to draft the statement that inaugurated a national Black Catholic Movement. Its provocative opening words were: "The Catholic Church in the United States, primarily a white racist institution, has addressed itself primarily to white society and is definitely a part of that society." (Anthony Flood)

The priests accused the U.S. Church of complicity with white supremacy; they demanded that black people be given control of the Catholic institutions in black communities; and, perhaps most surprising of all, they insisted that "the same principles on which we justify legitimate self-defense and just warfare must be applied to violence when it represents black response to white violence. Where do we go from here as "Spiritual People of Color serving the LORD'?

1. Develop a deeper respect and appreciation of African American Culture and Worship in the Catholic Parishes within our community.
2. Foster more black vocations as priests and nuns/sisters.

As the Prophet Isaiah tells us:

"Pay attention and come to me; listen, that you may have life. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, the steadfast loyalty promised to David. As I made him a witness to peoples, so shall you summon a nation you knew not, and a nation that knew you not shall run to you, because the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, who has glorified you." (Isaiah 55: 3-5, NAB)

References

<http://anthonyflood.com> Slavery and the Catholic Church

Wikipedia

Patricia Brady: Reflections

Hearing God's Call : A Vocation Story by John Nguyen

My vocation was first ignited by my mother, a very devoted Catholic. She taught me my first prayers and told me about the wondrous stories of Eucharistic miracles. Little did I know that the little sparks of my mom's devotion would start a raging fire of love for God in my heart. At only nine years old, I joined the altar service and the thought of becoming a priest was always on my mind. That is, until I reached middle school, where the vanities and temptations of the world drowned out God's voice. The thoughts of the priesthood quickly faded away even more when I stepped into high school. The burning zeal in my heart had cooled off and I simply wanted to start a career in the medical field. From the time I began high school, I told myself that I would do whatever it takes to become rich, famous, and have the most beautiful wife, all within the next twelve years. So began the arduous journey of taking multiple AP courses as well as volunteering for hours a week at a hospital to gain experience. I was indeed blessed to attend La Salle Catholic College Preparatory, which is one of the best private high schools in Oregon. My education gave me the opportunity to pursue whatever career I wanted for myself. However, little did I know that God had something else planned for me.

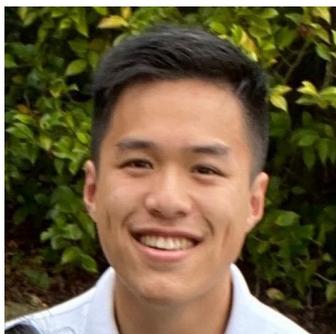
During my junior year of high school, my altar service group was invited to attend a Come and See event held by the Vietnamese Redemptorist, so I told myself, "Sure why not, it's an opportunity to explore Texas as well." However, when I came to the Come and See in Texas, I felt this force that touched my heart during adoration, and it was a feeling that I cannot even describe up to this day. I felt a great peace within my heart, and I told myself that I would give up everything to obtain that peace. So right after high school, I joined the Extra Patrium Vietnamese Redemptorists in Dallas, Texas. While with Extra Patrium Vietnamese Redemptorists, I tried my hardest to adapt to the Vietnamese culture even though I was raised in a very American fashion. After living a few months with the Vietnamese Re-

demptorist, things just became a nightmare for me because it was as if I had to learn everything from scratch. I started to doubt my vocation. So after much prayer and conversations with various priests, I decided to leave the Vietnamese Redemptorist at the end of that year. I remember telling myself, "what if I am being called to married life?" When I left the Vietnamese Redemptorist, I would say that this was the lowest moment in my life because I was lost, confused, and many people whom I thought were close to me left my life because I was now viewed as a failure. Nevertheless, God was there for me to comfort me because "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

During that summer I prayed that God's will be done. I had contacted the American Redemptorists and applied there since I still had the desire to join the Redemptorists to serve God and minister to the poor. If God willed it, then I would be accepted. But if not, then I prayed for his guidance because I did not know what I should do with my life. When I returned home, I immediately got a job and was willing to have a little taste of the secular world. During the application process to the American Redemptorist, I decided to live the typical dorm life of any college student. I wanted to become independent and have the full experience, so I flew from Oregon to the University of Dallas and stayed there to continue my studies with no family around. Amid all the crazy things going on in my life at the time, I could feel God watching all my actions as if peeking over my shoulder. And in some mysterious way, God preserved me, or else my life and future would have taken a very different turn.

Therefore, I continued my application with the American Redemptorist, and I was accepted into their formation program. However, before I put my foot into the formation house, I told myself that I no longer want to pursue wealth, fame, or fall in love with anyone, except God. Like St. Augustine, my

experiences have helped me come to know that
“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our
heart is restless until it rests in you.”



John Nguyen, is from
Portland , Oregon. He is a
Redemptorist seminarian
in his 3rd year of philoso-
phy, at St. John’s Univer-
sity in New York. He is
currently serving his sum-
mer ministry, with the
Redemptorist Community,

here at St. Alphonsus “Rock” Church, in St. Louis.



Redemptorist Missionaries

A Missionary’s Promise



Lord, by your grace and blessing you give me a Cross to carry.

By My Word and My Honor

I will always return to you either carrying my Cross

or

I will return to you on my Cross

R. J. Olive, C.Ss.R

Getting Off the Wall

by Fr. Steve Benden C.Ss.R.

I am writing this article today for many reasons, but the main reason is that I am saddened about the continued racial disharmony in this country. I feel called, in my own way, to bring these issues to a larger group, but in no way am I saying that I have all the answers. It is not my intention to anger people or to polarize them. However, I do feel that I have something to say. Some may agree with me and some may disagree, but I feel the need to enter into a deeper discussion about these issues. My hope for the future is to have a broader dialog. Let us not be afraid to work together in this regard.

As a Redemptorist, who is called to work for the poor and most abandoned, I believe it is my calling, to stand with those less fortunate than me. More than anything, rather than getting into a long discussion about racial discord and injustice, I wanted to say something about my own whiteness, and that is because I am white, and feel I have certain advantages not available to people of color. If you are white, and are reading this article, I ask you to at least be open to the possibility that your whiteness has given you certain advantages people of color do not have, and then perhaps you will find yourself advocating more for social justice as I have found myself doing.

Over the past 3 years, I have learned much having worked in an African American parish in St. Louis, St. Alphonsus Liguori the “Rock” church. About a year ago, with the murder of George Floyd, we had an open ZOOM meeting in the parish about what happened in Minneapolis. I was facilitating the discussion but was unable to handle the amount of emotion coming from the screen in front of me. People of color in my parish were angry and upset about what happened, but instead of trying to un-

derstand their pain, I felt myself getting very defensive and wanting to stand up for my whiteness. I wanted to shout out “Look, not all white people are racists. I AM NOT A RACIST. It’s not my fault.” After the meeting, I was confused about my own feelings. It took some days before I realized that the other people at the meeting were not pointing fingers at white people. They were not calling me a racist. They were just talking from their experience of being black, and I just needed to listen. Listening is a skill that needs to be developed. I needed to learn to listen. I needed to look into my own upbringing to understand who I am as a white person and the privileges I experience. This is not easy to do because it means you are opening up the possibility that things may need to change. After all, if I am a person of privilege, it may mean others are not given the same privilege, and if I am a good person I may need to try and change things.

I have done a lot of research over the past year and have come to learn a few things. White people in America, do not really experience their whiteness in the same way people of color experience their ethnicity. I never considered myself white. It never really came up. In the first 14 years of my life everyone around me was white. I did not understand what it was not to be white. In fact, I am still learning. If you ask a person of color about their color you can rest assured, it has been an issue at some point in their life.

I mentioned earlier that I think, because I am white, I have certain advantages over non-whites. This is called White Privilege. If you are a white person reading this today, this might be a red flag for you. You may not want to hear any more about it. I have heard white people when the subject of rac-

ism is brought up say “What do people of color want now. They are always complaining about something.” Well, people of color may just want to live the same American Dream as you and I but have not been given the same opportunities.

When I first heard the phrase White Privilege, I was threatened by it until I began to listen to non-whites, mostly black people, talk about their experience in life. For instance, one example many black people have had is that of walking into a store at the mall and being followed around by the store attendant. At first, they thought nothing of it, but then later realized it was because they were black, and the storekeeper was making sure nothing was stolen. For me, as a white man, this came as a surprise. Never in my whole life have I ever had that experience. I am a white man who looks like they have money, why would I have to be followed around the store? They want me to buy something and so give me every courtesy. This same courtesy is not always shown to people of color. It never occurred to me what people of color might have to go through just to go shopping.

Another story that comes to mind about White Privilege happened within the last year. We held a rally at the parish last summer where people from around the city gathered to talk about racial disharmony. A few white people were asked to say something, and one person said something about White



Privilege. (image#1978) Suddenly a story occurred to me in my own life that had recently happened. I was out driving in the county in St. Louis and was trying to get to a store. I had gotten off at the wrong exit and was frustrated. I got to a place where I wanted to make a right turn, but a sign indicated no right turn. I looked around, and when no one was coming from the other way, I made the turn. Unbeknownst to me, right behind me was a police officer. After making the turn, I see lights flashing behind me and I was pulled over. The police officer came to the door, I gave him my license, he went back to his car and about 2 minutes later came back and said to me “Have a nice day.” It was a brief encounter. I thought nothing of it at the time but remembered



that encounter while at the rally. I told the story and then said I was the recipient of white privilege. I said to the 200 or more people gathered there, that this same encounter probably would not have happened the way it did if I was a 60-year-old black man, and certainly not as a 20-year-old black man. There would have been all kinds of interrogation and confrontation about why a black man was in this part of town. We have all seen it. In fact, it happens all too often.

A second story of being pulled over by the police comes to me. I was part of a ZOOM meeting when this type of racial profiling of black drivers was dis-

cussed. The man leading the meeting was white and had 3 grown daughters. He had a friend, a black man, who had 3 grown sons. The white man asked the black man to add up how many times, in total, they had been pulled over. The white man and his daughters would do the same. After adding up the figures, the white family said they were pulled over a combined 8 times in their lives. The black family said they were pulled over a combined total of 127 times. I am sure many of us, whites especially, would find this hard to believe, but I do not think the black family would make this up. It is left for you to decide. If you are white and do not have the experience of being around people of color, stories like these may come as a surprise to you. They have with me, but now that I am aware, I cannot sit idly by.

Although the above stories have helped me understand that racism is a problem in this country, the incident that put me over the edge in this regard was the storming of the Capital Building on January 6. As I was watching that unfold, and then later thought about it, this was about as clear a picture you could paint about white privilege. I know others have commented on this, but I just have to say that if those had been people of color who did what those white supremacists did, the outcome would have been far different. There is no way the police would have tolerated the same behavior from people of color. I ask



the question, "Why is that?" And the only answer I can come up with is that our country was set up from the very beginning to favor the white person. This

has been the case for the past 500 years. We don't know anything different and still fall into the same patterns. White people, are almost always, given the benefit of the doubt, whereas people of color are not.

My point in telling these stories is that these kinds of things are not going away anytime soon until someone, 50 million or more white people, say enough is enough. It is not up to people of color to right the wrongs that have been done for so long. It is not enough for a white person to say, "I am not a racist, I have never hurt a person of color in my life. It is those other people that are giving white people a bad name. We don't have systemic racism here in America. I have never experienced it and so it can't be that bad." To say this and feel absolved from the story is not enough. It is not nearly enough. The only way things are going to change is for the white person to take inventory of their own lives. There is no sitting on the fence in this regard. If you are not actively trying to bring an end to racism, then you are allowing it to continue. Far too many white people have become far too comfortable with their own lives. People of color want to share in the American dream the same as you. I was always taught that if you work hard enough, anybody can make something of themselves in America. It's just getting out and doing it. It's just a matter of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps and making something of your life. Well, unfortunately, not everyone in this country has bootstraps to pull up. There are some who are at a disadvantage, and it is not their fault, the system has defaulted on them. I am calling on you to at least give racial equity a chance. Get to know people of color and listen to what they have to say. Don't be afraid to read about racial topics and learn what it is like to be a person of color living in this country. Perhaps we can change our country after all.

A Personal Reflection On Gospel Music

by: Connie Page

I have often said, I am NOT a singer. I am just a worshipper who sings. Music is a wonderful vehicle for worship, as King David and all the angels would agree. There are many styles of music of course.

One style is classical music. I love classical music. Schubert's Ave Maria and Handel's Messiah speak to my spirit. The words and melodies feed my mind.

Another style I love can be found in the church hymns of my childhood. Hymns like How Great Thou Art and, In The Garden, and Blessed Assurance speak to my soul. The words have theological value and heartfelt memories.

Then there is Gospel music, especially the African American gospel music you will hear at the Rock. Gospel music speaks to my **Body, Soul, and Spirit!**



The songs are from real everyday life, yet have the power to lead me to the throne room of God. "I feel it in my hands, I feel it in my feet, I feel it all over me!"

I think the power it has derives from pain...personal and generational pain. From that pain, it brings forth faith, hope, and love. It speaks to each individual on a very personal level.

Of course, it has a huge history which I can't begin to capture here. It goes back to African rhythms

and tonalities and then to the fields of America where African slaves toiled, and sometimes sang. We can hear the echoes of call and response and



field hollers. Spirituals emerged from the heart of that, expressing the pain, longing, and faith of a people!

The gospel music I love at the Rock, is made up of all those layers. Every song has its components of pain, truth, hope, and praise. Each one grabs you by the collar and causes you to recognize those elements.



It then calls us to respond with body, soul, and spirit. And we do...with a shout, a hallelujah, a dance, clapping of hands, arms raised in praise and thanksgiving. And a big Amen. And then...we hear the chains falling!

A Light in the Night Sky by Rev. Rodney J. Olive C.Ss.R.

The other night, after a long day, I sat down on the back porch of the community house to drink a cup of tea. I said, "Lord, I'm tired, so I'll just rest here for a while in your presence. Your servant is listening."

I could hear the night wind blowing through the trees, the crickets and creatures of the night singing, the night sky, the clouds and the moon joining in a gentle night song of praise to God.



As I continued to listen, I realized that even now the Lord reveals his presence through the majestic beauty of the night. Even in the darkness, Lord, your light still shines. The gentleness of your love touches both my body and my spirit, when I make the time to listen and hear.

I even find myself, joining the chorus in singing, "I Love you

Lord." Like others, I am reassured that you are right here at my side. I can hear you saying, "Isn't it all beautiful? I've done all this for you, because I love you."

It's amazing to discover that a light in the night skies can be a source of hope. Those moments in life when everything



seems so dark, the simple light of hope shines and reminds you and I that it is never that dark. God's grace and love is, and always will be more than enough.

I will continue to cherish the moments and opportunities to experience the presence of God. I praise God for the blessing and the opportunity to join in the night prayer, as well as the songs of praise and thanksgiving with the rest of creation. Knowing we can sleep in peace, because there is hope for a blessed tomorrow.

Pathways to Heaven by Rev. Rodney J. Olive C.Ss.R.

The desire of our soul is revealed in a simple prayer we say often, in our lives. "Lord, lead me and guide me along the right path." Mom and Dad often told me, "No matter where you go, always remember the path that leads back home." A simple pearl of wisdom, that reassures the soul.

The sayings of our elders are filled with wisdom and understanding. It is important to take time to truly listen and hear what is being shared. I remember being told often, "Go with God!" As we get older you and I understand this better. When one lives and walks with God, his light always guides our path.

There are many pathways in the journey of life. Is there a single pathway to heaven? I don't know. What I do know, is that as long you and I follow

God's guiding light, the pathway we are on will lead us to heaven. The times we ignore God's guiding light, we always get lost. The amazing thing is that when we call out to him, his light shines again, illuminating our path.

The pathways of life are always challenging, and always will be. No one need fear the light of day, the darkness of the night, nor the horizon before us. We travel, with God, on a pathway that will lead us to heaven. We have the Holy Spirit's assurance of that. Our focus is not on path beneath our feet. Our eyes focus straight forward, on the path ahead of us, because God is right beside us.

ST. ALPHONSUS LIGOURI "ROCK" CHURCH PROUDLY SALUTES THE CLASS OF 2021



The 2020-2021 academic year is history! Students, parents, and educators are relieved having survived the challenges presented by a global pandemic.

The school year started with virtual learning for some. Others spent the entire year in-school with masks and social distancing. We also know that many families were directly impacted when a parent or grandparent was diagnosed with the Covid-19 virus. Some families even dealt with the loss of loved ones

due to the virus. From those challenges, comes strength. It is time for celebration and recognition. This month we salute the Class of 2021 here at St. Alphonsus Ligouri "Rock" Church.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

Taliyah Bowman	12 th Grade Graduate	Taijah Rose Ross	5 th Grade Graduate
Kyle Gregory	12 th Grade Graduate	Chase Tyler	Kindergarten Graduate
Leilani Billups	8 th Grade Graduate	India Tyler	Kindergarten Graduate
Jaylen Jackson	8 th Grade Graduate	Khalan Dew	Pre-School Graduate
Alana Taylor	8 th Grade Graduate	Brielle Wilson	Pre-School Graduate

"Standing on the Rock" Magazine Team

Caleb Camp, co-editor

Bonita Cornute, editorial review, writer

Connie Page, writer

Mary-Ellen Judge, writer

Sharon Hawthorne, photography, writer

Rev. Rodney J. Olive C.Ss.R., co-editor

Nicole Colbert Botchway, editorial review

Patricia Brady, writer

Tamala Merritt, writer

John Wright, photography

Thanks to these members of St. Alphonsus Liguori "Rock" Church Parish, whose gifts and talents came together to make this magazine a reality. Thanks to Rev. Stephen Benden C.Ss.R., our pastor, whose support and encouragement empowered us to create something beautiful for God. Together with the entire Rock Church family we are committed and dedicated to continue following Jesus in spreading the Good News and evangelize the world around us. To God be the Glory.

Rev. Rodney J. Olive C.Ss.R., co-editor

On behalf of the entire "Rock" Church Family we invite you to worship with us, every Sunday at 10::00am, as we come together to experience the power of God's love in the liturgical celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

St. Alphonsus Ligouri "Rock" Church, 1118 North Grand Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63106

We would love to hear from you, please feel free to contact us: 314-533-0304,

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