



# Spiritual Moments



*Be Your Best*

*St. Francis de Sales*

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Wellspring Ministries

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*“Be Your Best*

*Give Your Best*

*Do Your Best*

*and*

*Leave the rest to*

*the Lord”*

*— Fr. Gus*

## ...and the seed grows.

Seeds of compassion, contemplation and wisdom are sown in abundance at Well-spring. I have seen them sprout and grow and mature in me and in the many who partici-pate in the different opportunities for spiritual growth. Wellspring has a way of drawing out the goodness that is within me and others. It brings that spiritual side to the forefront through visual aids, discussions, reflections, teachings, meditations and prayerful and quiet presence.

The landscape which was developed last year continues to thrive with butterflies, dragon-flies, bees and birds scattering the seeds in surprising places. The additions of a bird bath, benches for reflection and water well have been placed about, all with meanings of rich symbolism. As I walk among these things, I often hear the sound of rippling wa-ter, I feel the brush of gentle breeze, I see the richness of simplicity and smell the freshness of rain. All these things and more bring a sense of Christ' Presence to me. It is peace-fulness! It is joyfulness! It is gratefulness! It is the seeds that keep falling on fertile soil!

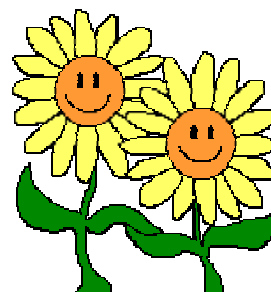
Inside the doors of Wellspring, the tapestries, pictures and other wall hangings help me experience the journey of Christ.....from his humble birth in a stable to his baptism, to his sharing of himself at the meal to the washing of the feet, to his death on the cross and to his resurrection three days later. This beautiful visual representation of the sequence of Christ' life is an opportunity to abide in His Presence, in His Life...and it is available to me and to all who walk in the door of Well-spring.

Teachings also continue to increase my un-derstanding. By attending a weekly class and a monthly gathering, new ways of thinking and living out my daily journey, take on a whole new dimension. Weekly classes are held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thurs-days, with morning meditation each Satur-day. The Eucharist is celebrated on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month, and monthly gather-ings are held on the first Sunday and first and second Monday of each month. Two more new faith sharing groups and a ministry team have been added this year.

In addition to the regularly scheduled pro-grams, deacon candidates experience retreats and training; young women gather every month for discerning their vocation; groups and organizations meet periodically for prayer and direction, as well as individuals and others that request personal spiritual guidance.

New classes and new opportunities are con-tinually being discerned and offered. Well-spring has much to offer to all who desire to further their spiritual journey and deepen their spirituality. I invite you to pray with me for God's blessings on all who gather at Wellspring and for the continued growth of all the ministries.

Kathy McCabe



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## *Men of Virtue...*

As I prepare to begin another year of formation for the Permanent Diaconate for the Diocese of Tyler, I do so spiritually energized following our summer sessions with Fr. Gus and, especially after our Annual Diaconate Retreat at the Catholic Conference and Formation Center in Dallas. Fr. Gus asked me to share a few thoughts on what the retreat meant to me. Where do I begin? As anyone who has ever been on a spiritual retreat knows, being on retreat affords us a unique opportunity, even if only for a brief period of time, to step away from the everyday cares and concerns we endure in our lives and enables us to concentrate on our spiritual growth and nourishment. This year's retreat met all my expectations and was more fulfilling than I could have imagined.

At each of the retreats throughout the spiritual formation process, or as he often describes it, the "transformation" process; Fr. Gus has centered his teachings and guidance on "Being and Becoming" deacons. During this year's retreat, he brought us to a more complete and comprehensive understanding that being and becoming a deacon means "being and becoming men of Holiness, Virtue, Community, Passion and Compassion."

This year's retreat was very special to me personally. I came to realize that I was not alone in my spiritual journey. As I meditated on being and becoming a man of holiness, virtue, community, passion and compassion, I felt not

only closeness to those attending the diaconate retreat, but also to my parish community to whom I am very grateful for their prayers and support, and especially to those who I have journeyed with over the past several years in "Seekers of Wisdom." I was strengthened by their presence in my heart. I knew they were with me.

The retreat was a humbling experience. When I began the formation process in 2002, I had many ideas of what I believed a deacon was, and how I believed a deacon should interface within his community based on my personal experiences. Throughout the "transformation" process, these ideas have also been transformed. However, the changes have, for the most part, been within the constraints of the academic and spiritual learning environment, and not through an interaction and dialogue with the community. During the retreat, these constraints were removed. Fr. Gus invited three different families, two from the Wellspring community and one from the Dallas area to come and share their impressions of the diaconate, and more importantly to share with us what they wanted and expected from Deacons in the Church. The love and sincerity I witnessed as each individual shared their message was heartwarming. They did not speak of the doctrine of the Church. They did not quote the Catechism. They spoke from the heart to help us in our formation. Although our guest did not know the theme of our retreat, as each spoke of what

they wanted and expected from Deacons in the Church, their words, without a doubt, described men of Holiness, Virtue, Community, Passion, and Compassion. Having members of the Wellspring community with us at the retreat made it even more special for me. It heightened the awareness of the relationship between my formation, my parish and the Wellspring community. They were intertwined and could no longer be looked at separately. I believe that each candidate listening came to realize that our formation is not only important to us; but that our formation, and the diaconate, is extremely important to the communities we will one day serve. When I heard the words of our guests, I knew in my heart that my community was journeying with me and I received great strength from this knowledge.

I want to thank Fr. Gus and the members of the Wellspring community who took time out of their busy schedule to spend time with me and the other candidates for the permanent diaconate. Your presence with us made it a wonderful and fulfilling spiritual retreat. Thank you.

Clarence Blalock



"...I was not alone in my spiritual journey."

**Editorial:  
Mother of Sorrows**

September fifteenth is a special day for Wellspring and the Fransalians. The present Wellspring house was blessed and inaugurated, eight years ago, by the then Bishop of Tyler, Most Reverend Edmond Carmody. This day was chosen for the blessing because it is the feast of the Mother of Compassion, traditionally known as the feast of the “Mother of Sorrows”.

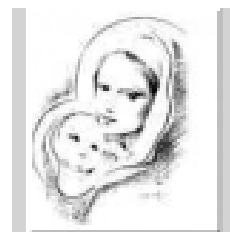
One of the core virtues that Wellspring community has nurtured over the years is the virtue of compassion. The community has made fifteen weeks of meditation on the virtue of compassion and reflected on a thought of compassion each day of last year. Compassion is becoming a major part of our life style.

Fransalians have a special devotion to the mother of compassion. On September fifteenth, the day of the feast, Fransalians all over the world make a devotional renewal of their vows. They are also encouraged to initiate programs for women and children in parishes and missions. We have begun a children’s Mass at St. Paul chapel to be celebrated on the first Sunday of each month; and at Wellspring, we have begun a new women’s faith sharing group in remembrance of the Mother of Compassion. This group will first study “Deus Caritas Est” (God is Love), the first encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XVI, followed by the study of the Beatitudes.

Jesus called his followers to be compassionate as the Father is compassionate (Lk.6:36). Compassion is soli-

arity with others in all their “heart-concerns” - the joys, the sorrows and the passions that move a person to life and all that involves life. Christian spirituality, in recent times, no doubt influenced by ecclesiastical Latin, has identified “compassion” with mercy, pity and tenderness. This can obscure the depth of meaning that we discover in the Scriptures. Compassion refers to the very core of our deepest feelings, to the very “heart” of the person.

The Hebrew word for compassion, “*rahamin*”, expresses the empathic connection of one person to another. This feeling of connection, in Semitic thought, has its origin in the experience of maternity. “*Rahamin*” refers to the mother’s intimate physical connection with her newborn as the primary image for understanding the nature of compassion. The implication here is that the mother’s physical and psychological bond with her child provides the basis for the development of love, affection, sensitivity, compassion, mercy, and tenderness.



Remembrance of the mother of compassion must inspire and challenge us to be and become compassionate as “the Father is compassionate”. This calls us to develop qualities of understanding, intense listening, intimacy with God and people, simplicity of living, sensitivity to the world around us and caring deeply and personally about others. May the Mother of Compassion help us to live compassionate lives.

Fr. Gus

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*New beginnings.....Three new groups have begun at Wellspring*

***Seekers Community***

*This is a community of people seeking to live a deeper spiritual life, sharing their faith, supporting each other and learning to make wisdom, contemplation and compassion as their way of life. A life style unique to the group is in the process of being developed.*

***Women’s Faith Sharing***

*A new Women’s Faith Sharing group has formed at Wellspring. The first topic is a six week study of the first encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XVI, “God is Love” (Deus Caritas Est). This series will be followed by a ten week study of the “Beatitudes”. Each session consists of prayerful reflection and sharing on the Scripture readings of the following Sunday followed by the study of the chosen topic. This group meets on Wednesdays from 10:00-11:30am and is open to all women.*

***Ministry Team***

*A ministry team is being formed at Wellspring this year. Men and women who have responded to the call for ministry are being trained to meet the needs of various ministries at Wellspring. After a period of formation, they will be commissioned to serve as teachers, animators of spiritual growth groups and spiritual helpers as the need arises.*



## WELLSPRING SPIRITUAL GROWTH GROUPS

The following is a brief description of the various groups that meet regularly at Wellspring:

**GIFT (Growing In Faith Together):** This group meets on Tuesdays from 7:00-8:30pm and is open to all. The topic of study at this time is “Spirituality of the Old Testament”.

**MEN’S FAITH SHARING:** This group meets on Thursdays from 7:00-8:30pm and is open to all men. The topic of study at this time is “Christian Virtues”.

**WOMEN’S FAITH SHARING:** This group meets on Wednesdays from 10:00-11:30am and is open to all women. The topic of study at this time is: “God is Love”, the first encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XVI.

**MEDITATION:** This group meets on Saturdays from 7:00-8:30am.

**SEEKERS OF WISDOM:** This group meets once a month. The purpose of this group is to form community with others and to seek the wisdom of God in daily living.

**SEEKERS’ COMMUNITY:** This is a community of people seeking to live a *deeper* spiritual life, sharing their faith, supporting each other and learning to make wisdom, contemplation and compassion as their way of life.

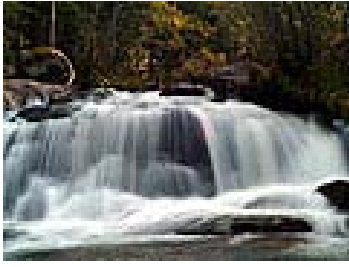
**SPIRITUAL HELPERS:** This is a group of people learning to be “spiritual helpers”.

**SPIRITUAL DIRECTION:** Fr. Gus offers spiritual direction for individuals and couples who desire to grow spiritually, guidance to those who struggle in their relationship with God and others and to those who are in the process of discerning direction for their life.

**RETREATS:** Retreats are offered to individuals, couples and groups on request and are personalized to meet the needs of participants. Guest rooms are available for retreats.

**Prayer Connection: 903-839-3486** - This is our prayer line for you to leave your request for prayer and we will pray with you.

**Website:** [www.wellspringcommunity.net](http://www.wellspringcommunity.net) You will find our “Daily Reflections” helpful for your spiritual growth. We bring you reflections on the Scripture readings of Daily Mass. Visit the other pages for information on the Fransalians, as well as other Wellspring activities.



*Spiritual Moments*

**Jesus calls: “Give me a drink! I thirst!”**

*“Not now! Maybe tomorrow...maybe in the spring!*

*My well is closed for the summer! I am afraid it’s going to be dry soon!”*

It’s never out of season to give a drink....never out of season or too late to be a well for our brothers and sisters - nor is it out of season or too late to receive from their wells.

There are wells hidden in the hearts of all the thirsty strangers we meet along the way. Sometimes our honest search for the living water can lead us to these wells. The woman at the well received her drink from the stranger, Jesus, and she became a well for others to drink from. (Jn.4:39)

I invite you to look for such wells along the way, on your journey, and to be such a well for others to find. Keep affirming again and again: Deep, down there, there is a wellspring!

A faucet will do in a hurry, but what makes the world so wonderful is that somewhere it hides a well so deep, full of life-giving drink. Sometimes people are like wells, deep and real, natural (unpiped), calm, cool, refreshing, life-giving. They bring out the best in you. Some experiences are like that too. They are all wells of wonder, wells of hope, wells of joy, wells of courage and wisdom.

**When you find such a well, drink deeply of the gift within. Then, maybe soon, you will discover that you have become what you received. Then you will be a well for others to find. Look beyond...don’t ever stop looking, because ... it is there!**

**Fr. Gus**

***Come to the Wellspring!***

*Remember the Samaritan woman,  
drawing water from Jacob’s well,  
only to hear the call to the Wellspring,  
to drink the life-giving water,  
which becomes a fountain within,  
leaping up to provide eternal life.*

*Come to the Wellspring,  
Affirming again that there is a spring within  
you!  
Deep, down there, there is a wellspring!  
Look beyond...don’t ever stop looking, be-  
cause it is there.*

*Fr. Gus*



**“BE COMPASSIONATE AS YOUR FATHER IS COMPASSIONATE” (LUKE 6:36)**



## **UNDERSTANDING STORIES OF THE BIBLE**

In the January 2006 issue of "Spiritual Moments", I had offered a way of "Praying Sacred Scriptures". In this article, I want to briefly reflect on the need to understand the stories of the Bible in their context and to go beyond the stories themselves to the meaning, the value, the truth and the wisdom they carry for us and for all now and forever.

One of the most frequent questions asked about an event, a passage, a text or a story in the Bible or any sacred scripture is, "Did it really happen?" We may phrase the question differently. Was Noah a real person? Was Abraham real? Did they live to be over hundred years? Did the Israelites pass through the waters? Was Jesus actually tempted by the devil? And many more similar questions...

We hope to discover that the events in the Bible are actually true. Then we can trust them as the basis of our faith...then our faith becomes more credible.

We may understand all the historical, cultural, social, moral, religious and spiritual factors that influenced the writing as well as the interpretation of the scriptures. But we keep searching for relevance, meaning and value. We may bridge the historical, cultural, social, moral, religious and spiritual distances. We may be able to gain an empathic understanding of the Bible world. Still, we have to find a way back to our world...what the past events have to do with us.

The one sure way to understand the Scriptures and let them speak to us is to become scripturally literate.....to let the words, images and stories of the Bible make their full imaginative and emotional impact on us.....we must enter into the language, into the symbol and poetry of the biblical text.

Bible is God's Word in human language using literary forms and styles of the people who wrote them and for whom it was written. Many literary forms have been identified by scholars: stories, myths, legends, wisdom sayings, similes, parables, allegories, prophetic utterances, proverbs, apocalyptic sayings, metaphors, personal proclamations, poems, historical notes etc. which are of great significance for our journey through the Bible.

We must begin to look at the many literary forms and historical notes and try to search for the wisdom and the truth they carry and reveal. We must look into the stories we read and go beyond them to discover the truth and the wisdom they hold for us. In a way, we must listen to what the story carries rather than the story itself. We must step into the story, encounter the characters and events and reflect on it to understand the truth and the wisdom it carries for us. Trying to analyze and gather all details of the story does not help us discover the wisdom that the Lord reveals. Let us look at the following example.

### **The Bible and the Old Wicker Coal Basket**

The story is told of an old man who lived on a farm in the mountains of eastern Kentucky with his young grandson. Each morning, Grandpa was up early sitting at the kitchen table reading from his old worn-out Bible. His grandson who wanted to be just like him tried to imitate him in any way he could.

One day the grandson asked, "Papa, I try to read the Bible just like you but I don't understand it, and what I do understand I forget as soon as I close the book. What good does reading the Bible do?" The Grandfather quietly turned from putting coal in the stove and said, "Take this old wicker coal basket down to the river and bring back a basket of water."

The boy did as he was told, even though all the water leaked out before he could get back to the house. The grandfather laughed and said, "You will have to move a little faster next time," and sent him back to the river with the basket to try again. This time the boy ran faster, but again the old wicker basket was empty before he returned

### *Spiritual Moments*

home. Out of breath, he told his grandfather that it was "impossible to carry water in a basket," and he went to get a bucket instead. The old man said, "I don't want a bucket of water; I want a basket of water. You can do this. You're just not trying hard enough," and he went out the door to watch the boy try again.

At this point, the boy knew it was impossible, but he wanted to show his grandfather that even if he ran as fast as he could, the water would leak out before he got far at all. The boy scooped the water and ran hard, but when he reached his grandfather the basket was again empty. Out of breath, he said, "See Papa, it's useless!"

"So you think it is useless?" The old man said, "Look at the basket."

The boy looked at the basket and for the first time he realized that the basket looked different. Instead of a dirty old wicker coal basket, it was clean.

"Son, that's what happens when you read the Bible. You might not understand or remember everything, but when you read it, it will change you from the inside out."

That is the work of God in our lives - to change us from the inside out and to slowly transform us into the image of His son.

Take time to read a portion of God's word each day; it will affect you for good even if you don't retain a word. God's Love is like the ocean, you can see its beginnings but not its end.

We can continue to reflect on this story and discover many new meanings in the context of our personal lives. We do not spend time trying to gather all the information about the grandfather and the grandson, we do not question whether it was appropriate for the grandfather to ask his son to use a basket to draw water and we do not analyze the wisdom of using a dirty basket for drawing water to clean it. The purpose of the story is not to give us information about grandfather-grandson relationship or to teach us what to use for drawing water. The purpose of the story is to give us insights, to help us reflect and learn, to enable us to gain wisdom through an experience rather than through a lecture in a class room.

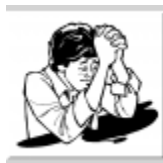
In much the same way, we must step into the many stories and events of the Bible, step into the text itself, in the context in which the text was written and bring it into the present context and reflect on it personally as well as with our brothers and sisters in a faith-community. In a process of communal prayer and discernment, we discover what God has to say to us today through His word in the Scriptures. We listen to God as we listen to each other in faith and in prayer. We need to raise questions about what the Lord is saying to us today in the context of our own personal lives as well as our life as a community. And we need to do it with deep faith and a prayer in our hearts. It is one thing to study the context and discover what the scriptures may have meant to the people in their context. But it is another thing to discover what it means to us in our context, what the Lord is saying to us and calling forth from us as we encounter his word today.

***"The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet; it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me." Martin Luther***

***"Lay hold of the Bible until the Bible lays hold of you." William H. Houghton***

***"Most people are bothered by those passages in Scripture which they can't understand; but I have noticed that the passages in Scripture that trouble me most are those that I do understand." (Mark Twain)***

Fr. Gus Tharappel,msfs



**Prayer Connection 903-839-3486  
Leave your message for prayer.  
Wellspring community will pray with you.**

***"BE COMPASSIONATE AS YOUR FATHER IS COMPASSIONATE" (LUKE 6:36)***

When burdens come, remember, God gave us shoulders.



Try to do God's will seeking God's way and not your way.

Simplicity and purity and detachment are virtues that lead us to the Wisdom within. Be Vigilant!

Life itself doesn't give you joy...life gives you time and space. It is up to you to fill it!

Organize your time according to what is important and urgent.

Discern your needs to see if they can be simplified. Let luxuries be luxuries and let them not become needs.



Do not worry about whether or not the sun will rise; be prepared to enjoy it.

# Wisdom

Light your candle. All the darkness of the world cannot put out the light of one small candle.



Every word that we speak has the power to change the bad into good.

Do unto others as though you were the others.

An apology is a wonderful way to have the last word.

Don't ask God for what you think is good; ask him for what He thinks is good for you.



Simplify your life! Knowledge is a process of piling up facts; wisdom lies in their simplification.

Better than being the head of the family is being the heart of it.



It isn't our *position* but our *disposition* that makes us happy.

Remember that a good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow.

You may fail many times. You are not a failure... until you begin to blame someone else.

Don't fret over what you would do with your time if you could live over again... get busy with what you have left.



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