



Fr. Peter Mermier

Spiritual Moments



St. Francis de Sales

Volume 22, Issue 1

Wellspring - Fransaliam Center for Spirituality
Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales

January 24, 2023



*'Be Your Best
Give Your Best
Do Your Best
and
Leave the Rest
to the Lord.'*

Fr. Gus

Wellspring

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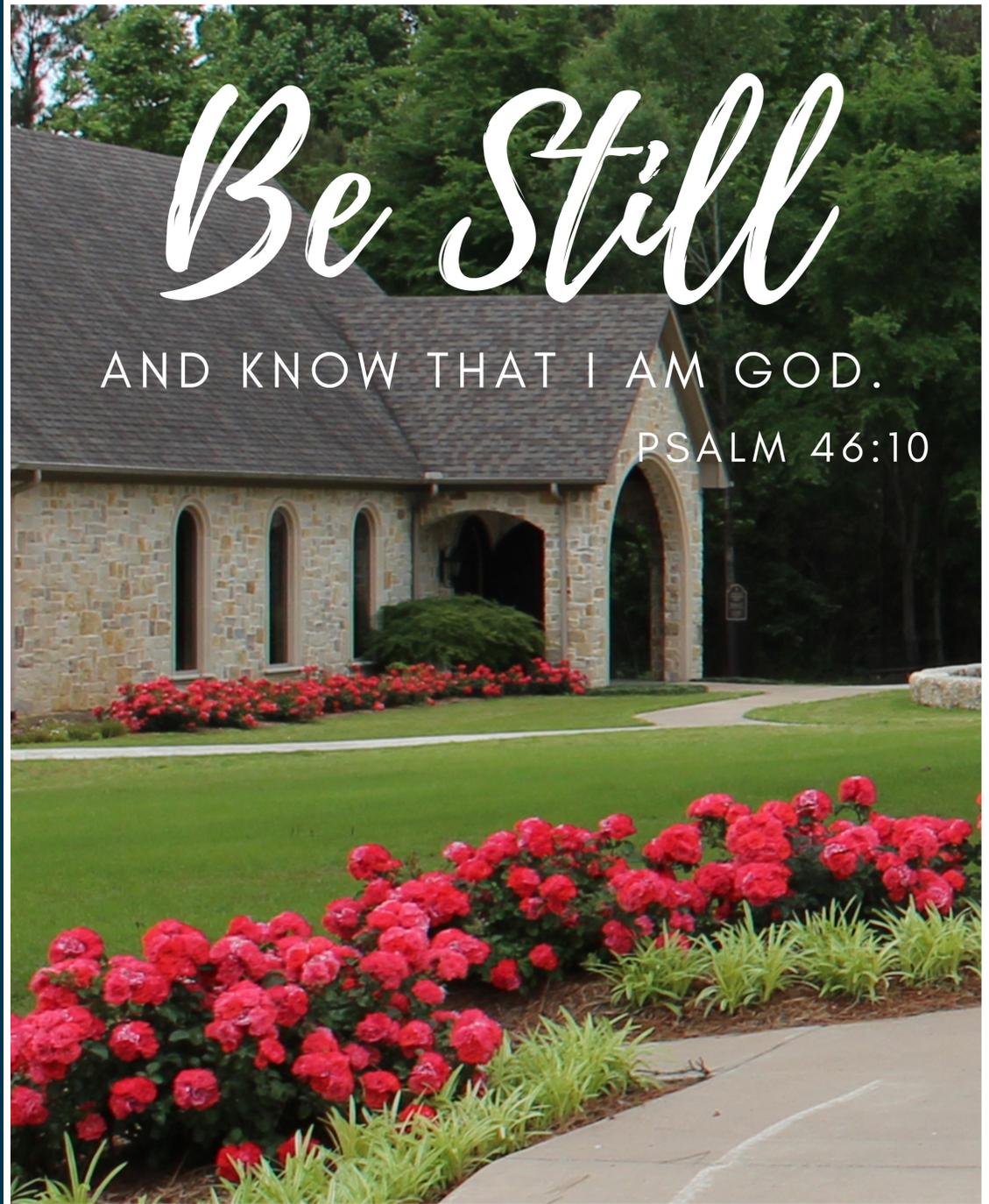
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Celebrating 25 Years of Ministry

EDITORIAL

I have often been asked why I chose to call our Spirituality Center “Wellspring.” The name was chosen to symbolize the most basic vision of our Center for Spirituality. I believe that there is, deep within every person, at the core of one’s being, a “wellspring,” a spring that wells up, a source of life, energy, and spirit that never dries and that yields more, the more it is tapped.

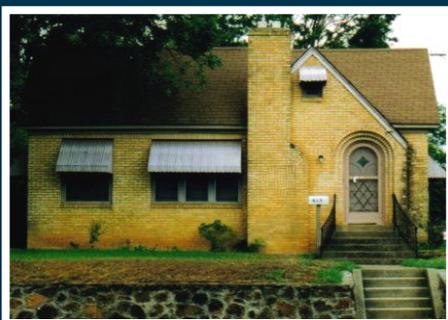
When I opened a similar center in India almost forty years ago, the first thing I did was to find a source of water. We needed the water for construction of necessary buildings, for gardening, development and maintenance of a five acre property and for the needs of our community. Water was found – a spring – at the depth of two hundred and fifteen feet. The source was not adequate for our purpose according to the company that dug the well, but within a few months of use, the spring began to grow and yield more than expected. It began to yield sufficient water to manage the construction of the facility, maintain the garden and take care of the needs of a twenty-five member community. This was the spring that welled up deep within the earth.

Similarly, God has gifted each of us with a “spring” deep within us – a “wellspring” of goodness, life and love. The more we draw from it, the more it will yield life-giving water. Jesus said, “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never be thirsty; the water I give shall become a fountain within him, leaping up to provide eternal life.” (John 4:14)

We have been in ministry at Wellspring for twenty-five years and our ministry has grown beyond my expectations. It has been an incredible journey of faith. We have much to thank God for and to thank the many who journeyed with us, gifted us with their faith, their hunger for God and God’s ways and the resources they shared to make the journey possible. Gratitude is my return gift to all who walked with me during the past twenty-five years. This issue of “Spiritual Moments” is dedicated to the many men and women, children and youth, priests and sisters who made this amazing journey possible through their faithful, prayerful and financial support and participation in the programs offered.

We do not know what the future holds for us, what the next twenty-five years will bring or what the Lord has in his heart for us. I invite all our readers to pray that we continue to welcome all who come our way; that we deepen our faith to see all of life as God’s wonderful gifts; that we live and move with hope and abiding trust in Emmanuel, “God-with-us”, in God dwelling in us amidst all our joys and sorrows; that we rise each day with desire and decision to love life, love people, love creation and love our God; and that we deeply love justice and peace and be at the service of both. May God bless us to be steadfast on our journey of faith.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs



First Location of Wellspring , January 1998



Present Location, January 2023

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF WELLSPRING



September 1998

It was a long, tiresome, dreary and wet drive from San Antonio to Tyler on May 5, 1996, but it turned out to be a joyful and memorable day as I was welcomed by the gentle, gracious and loving Most Reverend Edmond Carmody, then Bishop

of the Diocese of Tyler. We had a very pleasant and encouraging discussion about the needs of the young and growing diocese with limited resources. The diocese was only ten years old at the time, and Bishop Carmody was its second Bishop. We then discussed more specifically the possibility of opening a center for spirituality in the Diocese of Tyler. Bishop Carmody then appointed me Parochial Vicar at the Cathedral giving us time for further discussion about the Spirituality Center and proper discernment of the needs and possibilities and other details.

When I first spoke to different people about establishing a spirituality center in Tyler, someone said, "A Catholic Spirituality Center in East Texas? Good luck with that idea!" Another said, "Are you sure? The Catholic community is pretty small in Tyler." Still another quipped, "Who is going to pay for it?" Another person said, "Spirituality? That is for priests and nuns. Who has time for spirituality?" and yet another, "Spirituality is an Eastern thing. We are Westerners." There were other similar comments.

However, after much discussion, research, study and prayerful discernment, with the approval and blessing of the Most Reverend Edmond Carmody, the support of Monsignor Joseph Strickland, then Rector of the Cathedral in Tyler and now Bishop of the Diocese of Tyler and the support of the Cathedral parishioners, Wellspring became a Center for Spirituality in the Diocese of Tyler on January 24, 1998 and moved to the present location on September 15, 1998, on the feast day of Mary, the Mother of Compassion.

My vision for Wellspring was that it would become a safe haven, a sanctuary for prayer and contemplation, a place for spiritual growth opportunities, and a caring, compassionate and welcoming community with a lifestyle and ministry that reflect hospitality, joyful optimism, simplicity, stillness and peacefulness. An integral part of this vision was to establish a Shrine to the Mother of Compassion and to construct the necessary facilities that would reflect the lifestyle and ministry that was envisioned.

We have been in ministry for twenty-five years. We have done well, and we have much to be grateful for. It has been an incredible journey: from a series of lectures on spirituality to nurturing a contemplative presence, from the study of the beatitudes to the study and meditation on virtues, from the study of the spirituality of the Pentateuch to meditation on the spirituality of the Psalms, from the journey with the Gospel of Luke to the journey with the Gospel of John, from learning to pray to learning the contemplative way, from seasonal retreats to monthly retreats, from group retreats to more individualized and personalized retreats, from individuals seeking spiritual guidance and growth to a community nurturing a spiritual presence, from ministering to a few people to ministering to the wider community, from a small house with limited facilities to the present location with adequate facilities for study, prayer, meditation and contemplation.

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Besides the many Spiritual Growth Opportunities offered, Wellspring has also hosted many conferences, meetings, retreats and other activities of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales and served as the headquarters of the Fransalians in USA, and Regional house and eventually Provincial House of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales. Wellspring has also hosted many retreats and other spiritual growth programs for the Diocese of Tyler and other religious and charitable organizations.

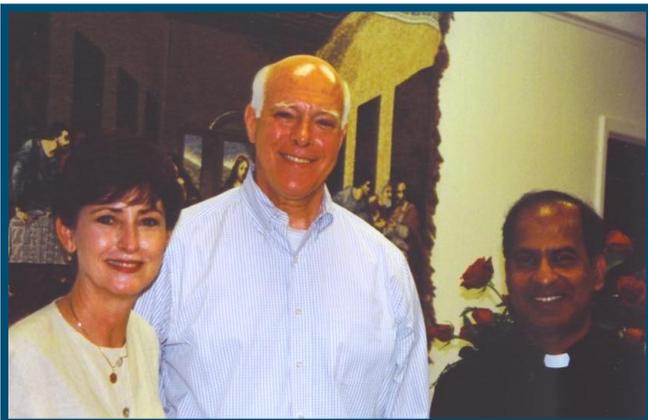
Wellspring had a very humble and simple beginning. The inauguration and blessing of its foundation was in a small, two bedroom house with a small living room and kitchen, gifted to us for use until we found our own facility. We functioned well in that small house for about nine months until we moved to the present location.

In September of 1998, the present location had three bedrooms, two of which were used as offices, a third bedroom used as a chapel and a living room used for classes, conferences and meetings and less than one acre of back and front yards. In twenty-five years, this small facility has grown to include a conference room and a dining room that can host over one hundred people, thirteen guest rooms for retreats, two sitting areas, three offices, two conference rooms, a library, a reconciliation room, seven restrooms and a Shrine to the Mother of Compassion, all of which is surrounded by 12 acres of pine woods. There are several prayer trails through the pine woods, Stations of the Cross, St. Joseph Sanctuary, a garden devoted to Mary, and other contemplative spaces.

Feelings of gratitude fill my heart today and moments of gratitude fill my life constantly. Gratitude is my return gift and it's always there, deep in my heart, to all of you who walked with me during the past twenty-five years. It is for the Lord who constantly calls, inspires, challenges and provides many opportunities to serve him and minister to his people. It is for those who walked with me during the past twenty-five years enabling me to fulfill God's plan for me, for Wellspring and for the Fransalians. It is for those who studied, reflected, meditated and prayed with me and those who shared with me a contemplative and compassionate spirit. It is for those who sought with me the wisdom of the ages and the wisdom of the sages. It is for all participants, friends, benefactors and well-wishers of Wellspring.



Jean and Jack Brown & Ed McKibben



Frances and Henry Kane and Fr. Agnelo Fernandes

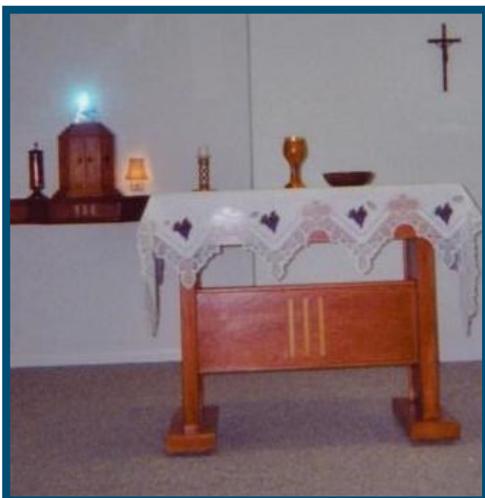
We do not know what the future holds for us, what the next twenty-five years will bring or what the Lord has in his heart for us. Many hours of the days and months ahead are waiting to be filled a hundred ways with a hundred prayers. We face the future, not knowing what the days and months will bring us or how we will respond. We have important challenges to face. We must live lives of faith; we must move in hope in the face of difficulties and tragedies; we must concern ourselves with loving and serving; we must work for justice and peace; we must

develop real spirituality, one that is rooted in life and live a life that is rooted in the spirit; we must witness to the reality of Jesus and His Gospel. We definitely have to make our faith and our hope and our love more real for us and for the world around us. We have a life to live and a mission to fulfill.

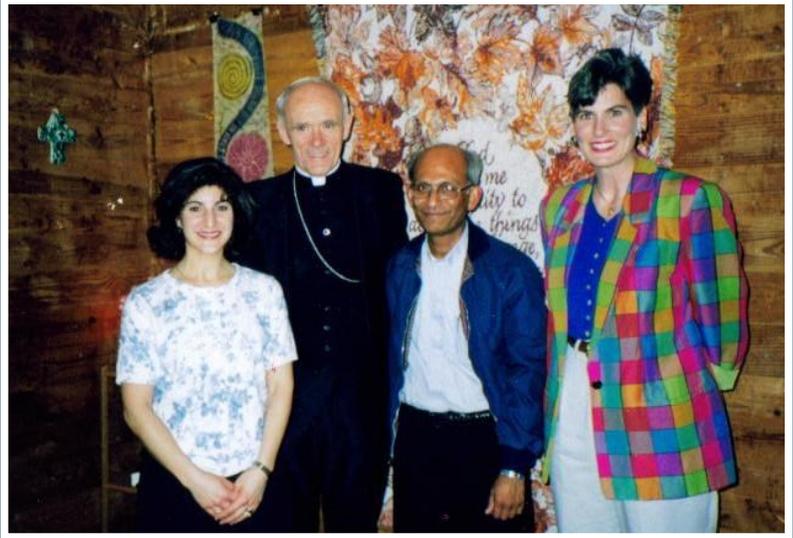
It is time for us to make our spirituality real. Our faith today is being tested. We need to stand our ground - be deeply rooted in our faith tradition. Our faith must be true; our witness must be authentic and continuous; our prayer must be intense and unceasing; our service must be generous and practical; our hope must be our strength; our love must be forgiving, gracious and benevolent.

Please pray with me that Wellspring will continue to be a contemplative space where one can find the well that wells up deep within and be a well for others to drink from. May God bless you with the finest and richest of his blessings and enable you to walk in the mystery of life with confidence, courage, determination and wisdom.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs



*First Altar built by Ed McKibben
First Tabernacle built by Clyde Christenson*



Kathy McCabe, Bishop Carmody, Fr. Gus & Heidi Cude



Fr. Gus with the Fransalian priests in ministry in the USA

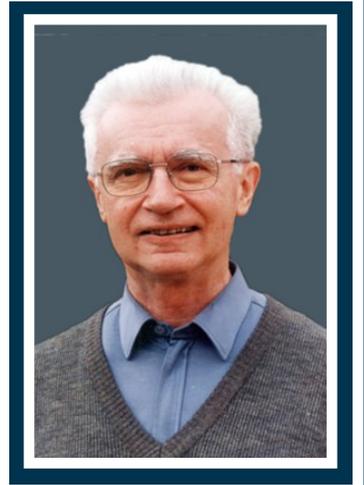


Fr. Martin Kopchik and Fr. Emile Mayoraz, Superior General

EARLY DAYS AT WELLSRING

TRIBUTE TO FR. EMILE MAYORAZ, MSFS

Fr. Emile Mayoraz, msfs was the Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales from 1977-2001. He was born to Augustin and Angélique Mayoraz on March 1, 1928 at Hérémente, Valais, Switzerland. He was ordained a priest on January 6, 1953. He served the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales as Rector of the Scholasticate, Provincial of Franco-Swiss Province and the 12th Superior General for four terms from 1977 to 2001, General Councillor and Admonitor from 2001-2007 with many other responsibilities. During his terms as Superior General the number of Fransalians grew from 450 to 950 members. He retired at Bonlieu in 2008 and entered an old age home in Fribourg 2018 where he died on January 30, 2022. I wish to share a few thoughts about Fr. Mayoraz because of what he was for our USA Vice Province.



USA Vice Province came to be what it is today because of the determination, wise counsel, and constant support of Fr. Mayoraz. On November 21, 1995, Fr. Mayoraz met me in Bangalore and asked me to come to USA to work with the American Mission with the intention of raising it to a Region of our Religious Congregation under the authority of the Superior General. His predecessor had asked me the same question in 1975. This time, 20 years later, I agreed to think and pray about it. I met him again on December 5, 1995 and accepted his commission.

On March 9, 1996, I met him again in USA with Fr. Martin Kopchik and made a long-range plan. The first thing in this process was to establish a ministry of our own. At the time, we had only a parish and a parish always belongs to the diocese. We needed something of our own to become a Region and to have recognition and stability as a Religious Congregation in USA. Fr. Mayoraz commissioned me to discern a ministry of our own that would serve the needs of the people in USA and search for a place where such a ministry could be established. Most Reverend Edmund Carmody, then Bishop of Tyler, welcomed me to the Diocese of Tyler and appointed me parochial vicar at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception with the understanding that we would discern the needs of the people of the Diocese of Tyler and respond generously. A two year discernment brought the decision to establish a spirituality center in Tyler with the approval, encouragement, and support of Fr. Emile Mayoraz and Bishop Edmund Carmody.

Wellspring was established as The Fransalian Center for Spirituality on January 24, 1998 on the feast of St. Francis de Sales. Soon afterwards, Fr. Mayoraz came to visit Wellspring and offered his support for our ongoing growth into a Region. He continued to actively be involved in the growth of the American Mission into a Region until the end of his term of office and beyond. When he left the office of Superior General, his successor, Fr. Agnelo Fernandes gave his wholehearted support, and we eventually became MSFS USA Region in 2007 and USA Vice Province in 2013.

Fr. Mayoraz was everything that we needed at that time. He was resolute, steadfast, tenacious, and unwavering in his commitments. I have personally experienced his tenacity. Without going into details, I must say that he helped and supported me personally in my ministry in Bangalore and then in USA as I tried to fulfill the mission that he trusted me with. His support was not material. It was personal – strength in difficult moments, wise counsel in conflicting situations and courage in contradictions and oppositions. The Region didn't get established without conflicts, criticisms, unfounded stories, oppositions, questions, and other hurdles. Fr. Mayoraz was a noble man. He listened; he smiled; he stayed focused on what needed to be done. Those who met him here 25 years ago remember him as the gentle man with a smile from Switzerland. I will cherish his memory as a simple, joyful, and inspiring man of God and a dedicated missionary.

I am deeply grateful to Fr. Mayoraz and I know that the confreres in USA will join me in thanking God for giving us this gift of a great missionary to inspire us and support us as Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales in USA. We will cherish his memory.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

ANNIVERSARY MESSAGES

Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil, msfs

Superior General - Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales

I rejoice with Wellspring for the wonders God has accomplished in and through this unique community for the past twenty-five years. The Silver Jubilee is a time “to shout with joy”, a time to celebrate, and a time to rejoice with thanksgiving. Conceived in the mind and heart of Fr. Gus, who was specially chosen by God at a particular time and space in history, Wellspring took birth as a Catholic spirituality center that offers opportunities to those who desire to be renewed and rekindled through various spiritual ministries. Serving God and God’s people for 25 years is a great blessing.



One of the paradoxes in spiritual life is that we cannot know God unless we desire God. We cannot desire God unless we have already come to know God. We cannot have an appetite for a certain food unless we have first tasted it. Wellspring reminds me of a space for men and women to be still and then desire, know, and taste God. I am aware that the Center provides an ambiance to live the paradox of desiring and knowing God through the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales. The contemplative silence at the Center promotes a contemplative lifestyle while being active in ministry.

Wellspring upholds the vision and charism of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales and the core spiritual principles of St. Francis de Sales. At a time when holiness was considered the monopoly of monks, cloistered nuns, and spiritual athletes who were capable of rigorous fast and austerities, Francis de Sales, by the wealth of his true and sound doctrine, made holiness available to all people regardless of their status. He taught that holiness was within the reach of anyone. Holiness is for the people and of the people. He focused on the need for lay people to be saints. Francis put his faith in his writings and made faith easily practical to follow even in modern times. Wellspring continues to disseminate the same spirit today.

My association with Wellspring goes back to its infancy stage when I used to visit the center during my student days at Catholic University in Washington D. C. I do keep in contact with the Center and its programs. The quality of life at the Center awakened in me a deep interest to listen to my call to holiness and answer my deeper questions. From the participants and well-wishers at Wellspring, I learned that the human spirit is not satisfied with the finite. People come to Wellspring, from all walks of life, to quench their inner appetite for God. I learned that divine union, and not private perfection, is the goal of mature spirituality. My holiness ‘temperature’ is not to be measured with the thermometer of perfection or doing everything right but with the thermometer of communion with God.

Wellspring has grown incredibly today and turned silver with more facilities and programs that promote the path of divine union and contemplative lifestyle to be more effective in active day-to-day lives. On this occasion of Silver Jubilee, together with the entire Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, I rejoice and thank God with you and for you, Fr. Gus, and the participants and well-wishers of Wellspring, for your persevering efforts to raise the Center to what it is today. May Wellspring continue to bring Glory to God and make Jesus known and loved!

Live JESUS!

ANNIVERSARY MESSAGES

Fr. Agnelo Fernandes, msfs

Former Superior General, Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales

Time has flown by, and the tiny seed of Wellspring has reached the age of 25 years. What an amazing growth and a saga of service to those who came thirsty for God and His Word! They went away refreshed, enlightened and wise. My heartiest congratulations to you, dear Fr. Gus, and to all the confreres, friends and associates who have made Wellspring a place of the palpable presence of God and spiritually energizing experience of the human and the divine.

I have known Fr. Gus and his persistent efforts to build up the Center at Tyler for the last 22 years. Now that I look at it in retrospect, I cherish the thoughts of what it means to me and to many others.

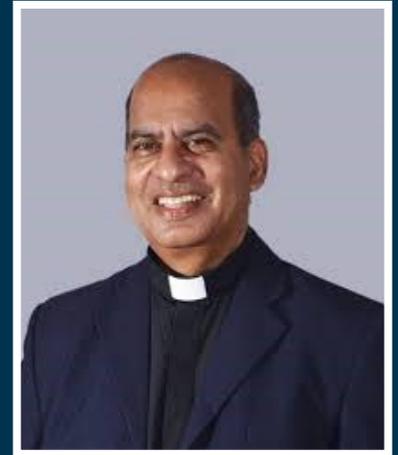
First of all, Wellspring and its varied programs and ministries are like leaven in the dough. There is no big advertisement of what is happening there; there is no conscious publicity or over-eagerness to expand or grow. There has been the natural, gradual and silent and persistent rhythm of divine life, a flow of grace, scriptural understanding, of true Catholicism, fraternity and respect that has attracted many to the hallowed campus of Wellspring.

Wellspring speaks of stories of personal conversion of hearts of so many whose only desire is to stand in gratitude before God.

Furthermore, Wellspring gives witness to a sense of belonging to God and therefore belonging to the community that gathers there to pray, seek counsel, be quiet and absorb the silence of the woods, the soaring of the pine trees, and the well laid-out gardens with well-chosen plants and creepers that make a point of harmony, care and solidarity of man with nature. Indeed Wellspring is a center that promotes wholistic and integrated spirituality as promoted by St. Francis de Sales, the patron of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales.

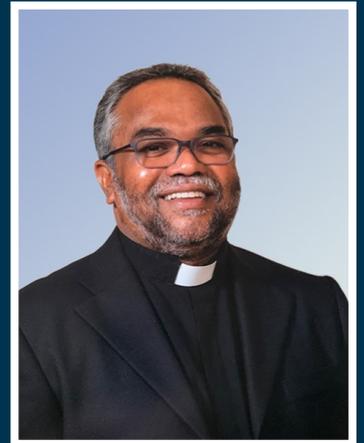
In the next place, one great blessing of Wellspring has been the leadership that Fr. Gus has provided to this Center with such dedication and commitment and a determined focus on the goal of this Center. He embodied its vision, and he lives that vision and shares that vision, deeply steeped in the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales. All those who come to Wellspring absorb it with ease and make it their own. The spiritual expertise, simplicity, wisdom of age and experience, the humility of a seeker of God in all things and above all things is what make Fr. Gus an authentic leader, an inspirer, and a committed guide of the people. I recall with great delight the conversations I had with him on so many issues and concerns and the surprising insights he would offer because he was a man of prayer who could fathom the seasons of the human heart in the light of God's Spirit. As we celebrate the 25 years of Wellspring, it is an occasion for us to thank God for Fr. Gus and what he means to all of us: a precious gem of God in His Mission and in our Congregation.

As you celebrate the Silver Jubilee of Wellspring, may all that you have arrived at, be a springboard to launch into the deep for the service of people and the glory of God. Indeed the Silver Jubilee of Wellspring is a milestone that reminds us that the spiritual journey has to go on guided by the Spirit and the Church. I wish you, dear Fr. Gus, confreres, and all associates God's blessings and love.



**Fr. Anthony Bonela, msfs
Provincial - Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales USA**

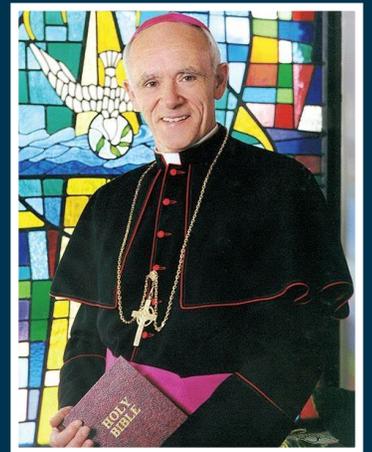
It is with great pleasure that I congratulate you and all who serve at the Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality on 25 years of serving the Lord and His people. In our busy world where we are constantly surrounded by noise and busyness, Wellspring provides a beautiful, peaceful, and calm setting where we can reconnect with God and take some time to focus on our own spiritual health and well-being. Personally, I have always had a wonderful and positive experience at Wellspring. Each time I have gone there for a retreat, I have always left feeling more at peace and closer to God. Wellspring has provided me with the opportunity to experience the contemplative side of Fransalian spirituality more deeply and has always given me renewed strength to go out into the world and minister to God's people.



I commend Wellspring on all they have done throughout the past 25 years, especially for providing so many with such meaningful retreats and classes. St. Francis de Sales must be very pleased to know that his important work and spirituality is being carried out in a beautiful way at Wellspring. May Our Mother of Compassion and St. Francis de Sales pray for us and for Wellspring – for many more years of fruitful work for the people of God.

**Most Reverend Edmond Carmody
Former Bishop of Tyler**

On a cold, wet winter's morning, a young priest by the name of Fr. Gus, came into the Catholic chancery office in Tyler, to visit the Bishop and to share with him his vision for the Diocese of Tyler. He was willing to serve God's holy people in any manner and always to help them in deepening their faith and to promote the Lord's kingdom of justice, peace, and joy. His vision was to provide a center for people to enable themselves to realize their deep desire to be united in the Lord, the saints, and Mary, Queen of Heaven. In this way, they would have an opportunity to pray to the Lord not to lay heavier burdens on them that they could not bear.



In order to fulfill this vision, he established the Wellspring Spirituality Center, where they now provide a place for reflection, meditation, and an opportunity for spiritual growth. We are thankful for the 25 years that Wellspring has provided for God's loving people in Northeast Texas. We pray that many more pilgrims will avail themselves of this opportunity to get to know the Good Lord in a more profound manner.

Bishop Edmund Carmody was the second Bishop of the Diocese of Tyler. He invited Fr. Gus to the Diocese of Tyler, gave approval for establishing Wellspring, blessed the present location and supported its growth as a spirituality center. Wellspring community and the Fransalians are ever grateful to Bishop Carmody for his initiative and ongoing support.

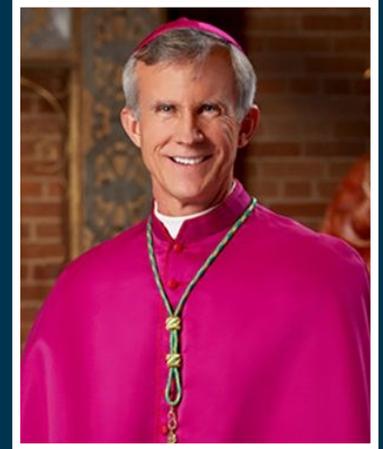
ANNIVERSARY MESSAGES

Most Reverend Joseph Strickland Bishop of Tyler

It is a joy to congratulate Fr. Gus Tharappel and all of those associated with Wellspring, Fransalian Center for Spirituality, as you celebrate your 25th anniversary. The growth and development of Wellspring over the years has been nothing short of remarkable and it is a true testament to the good work of the Fransalians, Fr. Gus and all the wonderful people that have supported Wellspring.

I am among those who remember Wellspring's humble beginnings in the little house adjacent to what was then Trinity Mother Frances Hospital. The goodness and profound yet simple spirituality that began to be fostered there has blossomed into a significant center for retreats and spiritual opportunities that serves the Catholic community and beyond in the Tyler area. The present location on Rhones Quarter Road provides a beautiful oasis for all who are seeking a peaceful and enriching encounter with the Lord. I know that many join me in prayers of thanksgiving for the past twenty-five years and continued prayers that Wellspring will flourish for many years to come. May God bless the Fransalians, Fr. Gus and all who are part of the Wellspring community.

Bishop Joseph Strickland is the fourth and present Bishop of the Diocese of Tyler. He was the Rector of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Tyler at the time of the founding of Wellspring. He blessed the foundation in the absence of the then Bishop Carmody. He has always been and continues to be a support to Wellspring. Without his support, we would not be where we are today.



Easter Sunday Mass 2022

ACTIVITIES AT WELLSPRING



Retirement and Beyond Meeting



MSFS Meeting

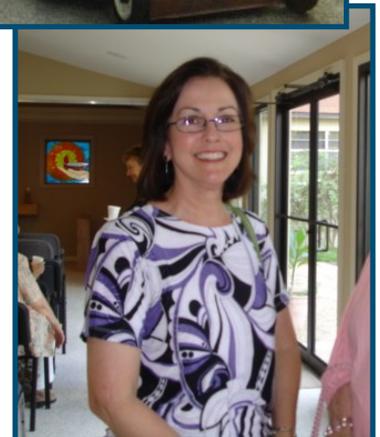
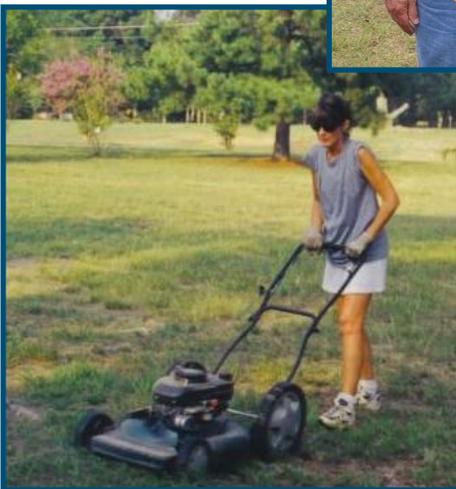
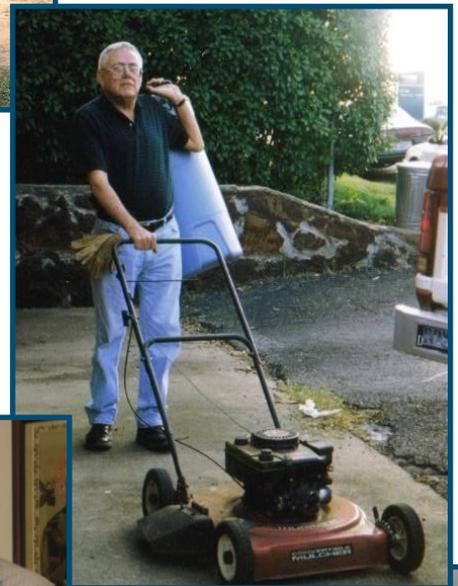


Community Gathering

THANK YOU...

- **Bishop Edmond Carmody**, Second Bishop of the Diocese of Tyler, for welcoming us to Tyler and for his approval of Wellspring as a Center for Spirituality in Tyler
- **Bishop Alvaro Corrada**, Third Bishop of the Diocese of Tyler, for his approval of Wellspring as the Regional House of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales in the USA
- **Bishop Joseph Strickland**, Present Bishop of the Diocese of Tyler, for his approval of Wellspring as the Vice Provincial House of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales in the USA, his approval and blessing of the Mother of Compassion Shrine and for his encouragement and ongoing support
- **Father Emile Mayoraz, msfs**, former Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, for his approval and support for establishing Wellspring as a Center for Spirituality in the Diocese of Tyler
- **Father Agnelo Fernandes, msfs**, former Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, for his guidance and support for Wellspring
- **Father Abraham Vettuvellil, msfs**, the present Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, for his assurance of prayer and ongoing support
- **Fr. Anthony Bonela, msfs**, Provincial of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales USA, for his encouragement and assurance of ongoing support for the Wellspring ministry
- **Fr. John Peter Arul**, for his joyful and unassuming presence and generous participation in maintaining Wellspring as a welcoming and peaceful place
- **Bari Walker**, for helping with the administrative responsibilities of Wellspring, planning retreats and other spiritual growth opportunities and her active participation in the various ministries of Wellspring
- **Patricia Cussen**, for sharing her time and talents in service to the Wellspring community and her active participation in the ministries of Wellspring
- **Maria O'Campo and Lupe Artega**, for joyfully keeping the facilities and grounds at Wellspring in good order
- **Pam and Jay Schulz and the Enviro-Care staff**, for their ongoing care of our grounds and for keeping it a neat and welcoming place
- **Eva and Liberato Aparicio, Clarence Blalock, Martha Carney, Clyde Christenson, Chet Collins, Heidi Cude, Walt Geisler, Mary and Ted Green, Sam Hall, George Holland, Mary Huber, Kathy and Brian McCabe, Mary Ellen and Ed McKibben, Ray Modlin, Mary Neal, Joe Oppenheimer, Sue and Al Platzer, Matt Schulz and Geof Walker** and all others who have actively played a role in the formation and upkeep of Wellspring in the last twenty-five years
- **All Contributors and Donors**, for their financial assistance for the maintenance of Wellspring
- **All Participants**, for sharing in the mission of Wellspring

**GRATITUDE IS NOT ONLY THE GREATEST OF VIRTUES, BUT
THE PARENT OF ALL OTHERS
CICERO**



WORKING AT WELLSRING

CONTEMPLATIVE SPACES AT WELLSRING

As you walk around the Wellspring campus, the features and symbols you encounter carry spiritual significance that call us to prayer, reflection, meditation and contemplation. Each of these features was designed specifically to help the spiritual seeker to be still, to listen and to contemplate the presence and movement of God in his or her life. St. Francis de Sales tells us that every moment is pregnant with the voice of God. Each of the following "contemplative spaces" helps the spiritual seeker to be still, to listen, to contemplate and respond to the voice of God.



Welcoming Jesus - The statue of Jesus welcoming all who come to Wellspring is what you see first as you drive into the parking lot. Wellspring has always been a welcoming place. The welcoming statue of Jesus symbolizes the hospitality of Wellspring to all who come to visit and participate in the many spiritual growth opportunities offered here. All are welcome. The call of Jesus was and still is, "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) Wellspring invites all to "come away by yourselves to an out of the way place and rest a while." (Mark 6:31)



The Broken Pot - The broken pot is visible as one drives into the parking lot at Wellspring. If you look inside the broken pot, you will find new life emerging from its brokenness. There is always new life in brokenness. Broken fragments are the birthplace of hope. The broken pot is a reminder to us that brokenness always carries a gift. Brokenness makes us aware of human frailty and helps us remember that we can do nothing in our own strength, but we can do all things by the strength that God gives us.



The Well - The well symbolizes the most basic vision of Wellspring that there is, deep within every person, a "wellspring" - a spring that wells up – a source of life, energy, and spirit, that never dries and that yields more, the more it is tapped. God has gifted each of us with a spring deep within us – a "wellspring" of goodness, life and love. The more we draw from it, the more it will yield life-giving water. Jesus said, "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never be thirsty; no, the water I give shall become a fountain within him, welling up to provide eternal life ." (John 4:14)



The Overflowing Jar - The overflowing jar in our courtyard is symbolic of the abundance of blessings and grace that God pours into our lives. A jar runs over when it cannot hold all that is being poured into it. The psalmist says, "My cup overflows." (Psalm 23:5) Our Sacred Scriptures emphasize the excessive love, blessing, and power that God desires to pour out on those who love Him. Look closely at the jar. The water that flows over continues to fill the jar and the jar remains full and overflowing. This reminds us of what Jesus said to his followers, "Give, and it shall be given to you. Good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, will they pour into the fold of your garment. For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38)



The Empty Vessel - The empty vessel on the rocky mount in front of the DeSales House, facing the sky, is symbolic of our openness to heaven, to realities beyond this world. It is symbolic of waiting, empty and ready, to receive what the Lord sends. It is also a reminder that we are "earthen vessels" holding the glory of God. (2 Corinthians 4:7) When we empty ourselves, we allow God to fill us in the way He sees fit; the way He knows will benefit us the most.



The Prayer Spiral—The prayer spiral at Wellspring symbolizes the two-fold movement of spiritual life. Spiritual life is a "spiralic" movement, a life-long journey inward toward the core of our being and outward toward the rest of creation. It is a movement that takes us inward to discover God within us, to experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to be moved by the love of God. This experience of God moves us outward, transforming our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, behavior patterns and relationships with all people.



Three Cypress Trees - At Wellspring, we have three cypress trees behind the pond. They stand tall and green and strong, pointing to the sky, calling all who pass by to look beyond the immediate to the eternal, the transitory to the everlasting, the earth to the heavens and the world of man to the world of God. The three cypresses remind us of the three dimensions of man - body, mind and spirit. They call us to contemplate the movement of the whole man - body, mind and spirit - to the whole of God - Father, Son and Spirit.



The Pond and the Fountain - The beautiful pond and fountain are reminders of our baptism in the spirit. When Jesus was baptized, he was identified and affirmed as the beloved son of God and empowered with the Holy Spirit. This is what happens at our own baptism. We are identified and affirmed as “sons of God” and empowered with the Holy Spirit to live as sons of God and to fulfill the mission entrusted to us. We are to be immersed into the character of God, to be identified with the image of God, to be named to image God.



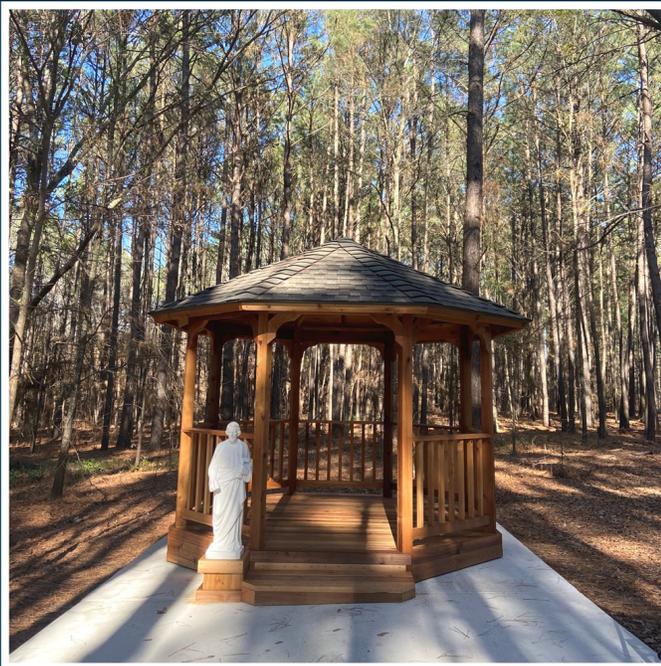
Prayer Walk, Journey with Jesus to Death & Beyond –Located behind the pond, this prayer walk is a contemplative walk with Jesus during the last part of his life, making the journey He made, embracing the truth He proclaimed, picking up the cross He carried, suffering the death He died, rising with him to the newness of life, living a new life with all the challenges that life brings and living the way He lived where we are, where God has placed us at this point in our history.



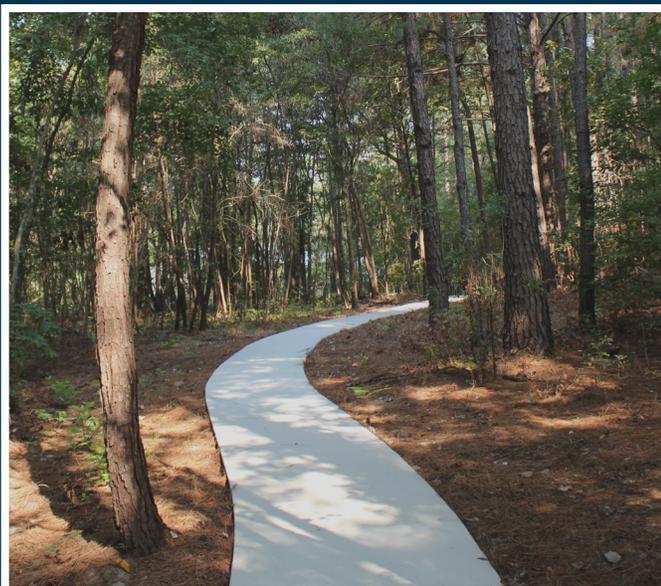
The Memorial Garden – The memorial garden, located just behind the shrine, is a peaceful green space dedicated to our ministry of compassion. Jesus reminds us to “Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.” (Luke 6:36) With the completion of the Memorial Garden, we have a place to remember well-wishers and friends who are no longer with us, and young families who have lost babies to miscarriage have a place to bury the remains of their loved ones.



Stations of the Cross - Located on one of the paths through the woods is the traditional Stations of the Cross. The "Stations of the Cross" or the "Way of the Cross" is a Catholic Christian devotion which meditates on the many events leading to the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fourteen stations each represent an event which occurred during the journey of Jesus to death on the cross at Calvary. Walking the stations gives us the opportunity to remember and meditate on the critical points on the journey of Jesus to Calvary.

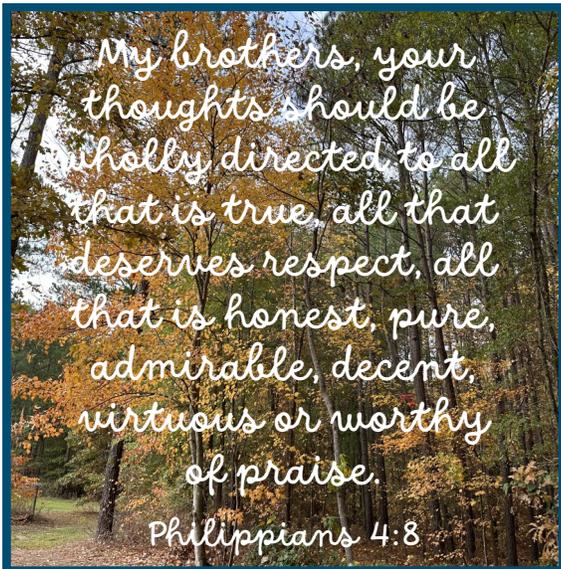


St. Joseph's Sanctuary - The sanctuary sits in the middle of the beautiful pine woods that surround Wellspring. Matthew's gospel describes Joseph as a just man, a "tzaddik." In Biblical times, one of the most beautiful compliments one person could give to another was to call him "tzaddik," meaning a person of courage, justice and virtue, a person who is at one with God and people. Joseph was a person who listened to the angel asking him not to be afraid to take Mary home as his wife and listened again to the angel asking him to take the child, Jesus, to safety and protect him from Herod. He faced many responsibilities and handled them with unfailing courage and wisdom. St. Joseph invites all people of faith to be still, to listen to the voice of God, to contemplate God's word and surrender to God's will and purpose.



Paths through the Woods and the Wilderness Trail - Both our concrete paths through the beautiful pine woods of Wellspring and our gravel wilderness trail invite our visitors to slow down and enjoy the beautiful creation given to us by God. Throughout our facilities you often see the scripture verse, "Be Still and Know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10) Living in a fast-paced world, it is important to take time to step away to be in the presence of God. A walk through our beautiful forest allows our participants to slow down and bask in the Lord's presence and creation.

BEING AND BECOMING VIRTUOUS



Each year, I have been choosing a virtue to study with Wellspring community in the hope that such a study would form, shape and transform our Christian character. It has become a wonderful tradition that continues to help us grow in virtue and become virtuous people. There has been much emphasis on the “saving act” of Christ and accepting Christ as our “personal savior.” There needs to be more emphasis on living that commitment to Christ as our Savior.

This calls forth our recognition that we stand in need of ongoing conversion, change, growth and transformation in Christ. For genuine conversion and transformation in Christ to happen, we

must identify the good as well as the bad in us, in others and in the world around us. The good must be named and nurtured, and the bad must be named and eliminated. There seems to be more emphasis on understanding the bad and the sinful rather than the good and the virtuous. There needs to be a renewed effort at understanding and nurturing virtues without neglecting the study of the vices.

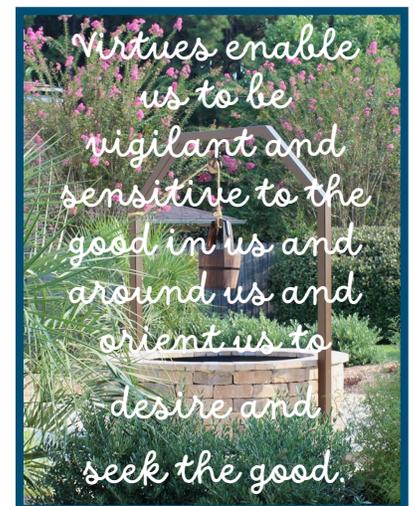
Virtues are characteristic, inherent qualities that enable a person to fulfill the purpose of his or her life – to facilitate intentional and purposive living. Virtues make a person “whole” while vices make a person diminished or depraved. Virtues are inner qualities, possessed internally. They represent how a person is identified by characteristic and consistent behavior.

The English word virtue derives from the Latin word “virtus” which in turn derives from the Sanskrit word “vir” meaning “man” – the strength, the quality and the character of “man,” that which is of the “essence” of human nature. Virtues are “strengths” that facilitate the ultimate enhancement of the person in goodness, in perfection, in sanctity - in holiness. Virtues are humanizing because they are sanctifying while vices are dehumanizing because they are degrading, degenerating, destroying.

Our Christian baptism give us an indelible character in Christ. This character needs to be formed, shaped, reformed, reshaped and transformed in Christ as we continue our journey of life. Virtues are the resources and the strengths that facilitate this process of conversion and transformation, especially through life’s many conflicting situations. Virtues enable us to be vigilant and sensitive to the good in us and around us and orient us to desire and seek the good.

St. Paul captured the idea of virtue and the living of a virtuous life when he advised the Philippians, “My brothers, your thoughts should be wholly directed to all that is true, all that deserves respect, all that is honest, pure, admirable, decent, virtuous or worthy of praise.” (Philippians 4:8)

Nearly half of St. Francis de Sales' book, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, is dedicated to virtues. He practiced and preached about the little virtues such as honesty, acceptance, generosity, humility, gentle strength, kindness, patience,



simplicity, liberty of spirit, interiority, joyful optimism, courage, acceptance and stewardship. According to St. Francis de Sales, little virtues are those that can be practiced by anyone at any time and in all situations. The great virtues appear to be mere wishful thinking without the practice of the little virtues.

Wellspring community has studied the following virtues over the years.

Hope – 2003	Justice - 2004	Compassion - 2005
Wisdom - 2006	Faithfulness - 2007	Optimism - 2008
Prayerfulness - 2009	Peacefulness - 2010	Joyfulness - 2011
Steadfastness – 2012	Gracefulness – 2013	Courage - 2014
Gentleness – 2015	Mercy – 2016	Hopefulness - 2017
Generosity – 2018	Hospitality – 2019	Stillness - 2020
Gratefulness – 2021	Simplicity – 2022	

Wellspring Community will be studying and reflecting on the virtue of “Steadfast Love” in 2023. You can find our article on “Steadfast Love” on page 22 of this journal.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs



We recently added a virtue wall in the main building at Wellspring. We have framed one quote from each year of our study of the virtues.

ADVICE FROM ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

Be at peace.

Do not look forward in fear to the changes of life; rather look to them with full hope as they arise.

God, whose very own you are, will deliver you from out of them.

He has kept you hitherto, and He will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand it, God will bury you in his arms.

Do not fear what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you then and every day.

He will either shield you from suffering, or give you unfailing strength to bear it.

Be at peace, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imagination.



MOTHER OF COMPASSION SHRINE



Wellspring, Fransalian Center for Spirituality, was blessed with a house for its ministry on Rhones Quarter Road in Whitehouse on September 15, 1998 on the feast of the Mother of Compassion, traditionally known as "Our Lady of Sorrows." It is a very special day for us, Fransalians, as devotion to the Mother of Compassion has been an integral part of our spiritual tradition from the start of the Order. It is even more special for us at Wellspring since a major part of our ministry is the ministry of compassion, prayer and contemplation. In 2014, God blessed us with a Shrine, and we dedicated it to God in honor of the Mother of Compassion, calling it the "Mother of Compassion Shrine."

Wellspring has gone through a number of levels and layers and dimensions of growth over the years and they are visible to the contemplative eyes...the rest of us may need a little help to see. A quiet, reflective, contemplative walk through Wellspring takes a person from the surface to the core of the spirituality being nurtured by the community. Surrounded by the tall East Texas pine trees, the oaks, the hollies, the elaeagnus and other trees and shrubs, one is moved to sing with the psalmist, "The heavens proclaim the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands." (Psalm 19) A simple walk through the grounds invites a person to reflection, prayer, praise and contemplation.

One may walk through the many layers, levels and dimensions of the grounds and facilities to reach the Mother of Compassion Shrine, the focal point, the center of devotion, prayer, worship and contemplation. The Shrine itself invites a person to move through many layers and levels and dimensions of spirituality...from the sweaty hands of common laborers who helped build the Shrine to the quiet and gentle presence of the man or woman of prayer and contemplation. Entrance into the sanctuary takes you through the same process from the entrance to the narthex to the body of the Shrine to the sanctuary. In the sanctuary, the altar stands silent and loud, quiet and calling, gentle and strong, outstanding and yet humble. The altar is surrounded by other layers and dimensions, the ambo representing the Word of God, the crucifix, the tabernacle and the empty cross.

Hovering behind all these and yet magnificently visible to all is the mosaic of the Mother of Compassion, blessing and gracing all and inviting a contemplative presence. A mosaic is an image of beauty, harmony, hope, courage, strength, tenderness and peacefulness. Many colorful pieces have become one harmonious peace of beauty. The Mother of Compassion is an image of beauty, harmony, hope, courage, strength and peacefulness.

Mary, as Mother of Compassion, has always been a fearless, powerful, moving and yet gentle and strong figure for me and my ministry. She stood fearlessly at the cross while others fled. She stood strong seeing her son beaten, bruised and placed under the burden of the cross. She was courageous and unafraid to stand by the cross as her son hung on the cross and welcomed her son's lifeless body into her arms. She stepped into the pain, rejection, loneliness, anguish, and passion of her son and also that of his disciples, without going under. She stood strong and steadfast for her son and for his disciples. She became strength for the suffering, lonely, rejected and the sorrowful. She emerged from her sorrow to become for us a fearless, powerful, courageous and moving figure.

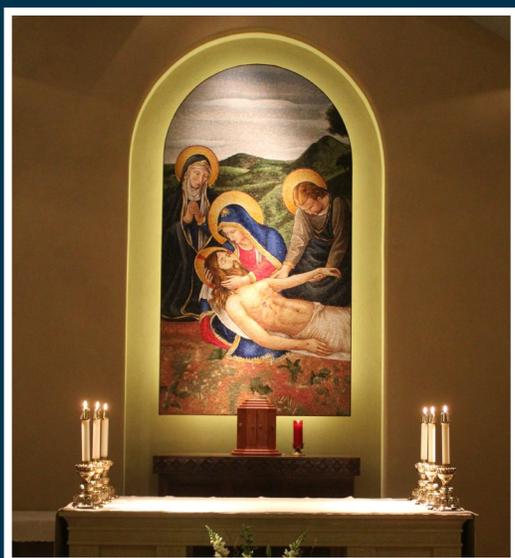
I have seen many men and women rising from deep down sorrow from the loss of loved ones, from the burdens of messy divorces, from unimaginable tragedies and from many other slings and arrows. I have also seen many men and women emerge from deep down sorrow to become fearless, strong, courageous, powerful and inspiring people. They found Grace; they found wisdom; they found God, and in this process they found themselves.

The many sorrowful fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters that I have known over the years have taught me to trust in Divine Providence, to wait patiently with open arms, to hope when things seem to fall apart and to believe that with God all things are possible. They continue to teach me that it is possible for us to rise above our sorrowful moments, however deep they may be, and stand strong and tall and be steadfast in God's Grace. And that is what the Mother of Compassion continues to teach me and challenge me as well.

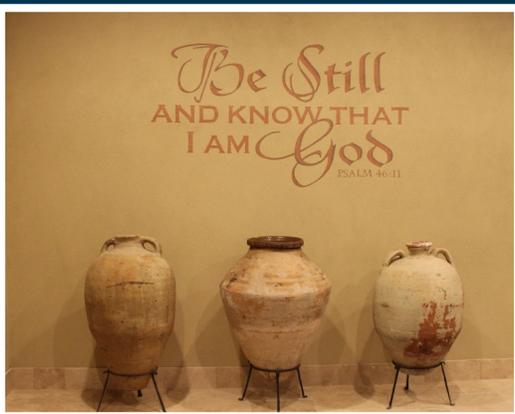
It is my hope and prayer that the Shrine of the Mother of Compassion will inspire many to have confidence, to stand strong during difficult moments, to rejoice during joy-filled moments, to be grateful during grace-filled moments and to have peace. May the Mother of Compassion be a source of Grace and strength for us all.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

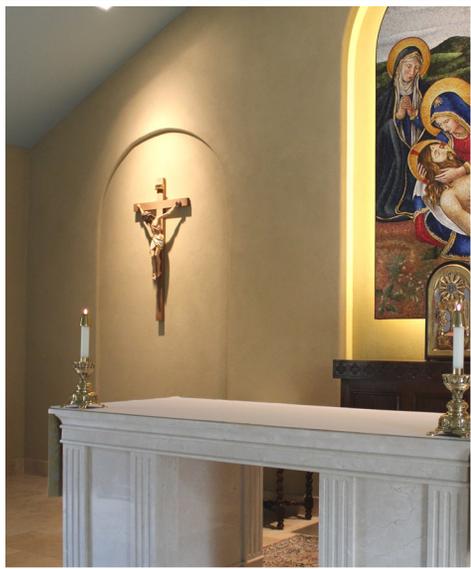
INSIDE THE MOTHER OF COMPASSION SHRINE



The Mosaic – Hovering behind the altar, and yet magnificently visible to all, is the inspiring, moving mosaic of the Mother of Compassion. Many colorful pieces have become one harmonious peace of beauty and harmony. Mary, the Mother of Compassion, has always been a fearless, powerful, moving and yet gentle figure for all times and peoples. She stepped into the pain, rejection, and passion of her son and that of his disciples. She emerged from the sorrow to become for us a fearless, courageous and moving figure. The mosaic inspires us to have confidence, to stand strong during difficult moments, to rejoice during joy-filled moments, to be grateful during grace-filled moments and to have peace. It calls us to prayer and meditation.

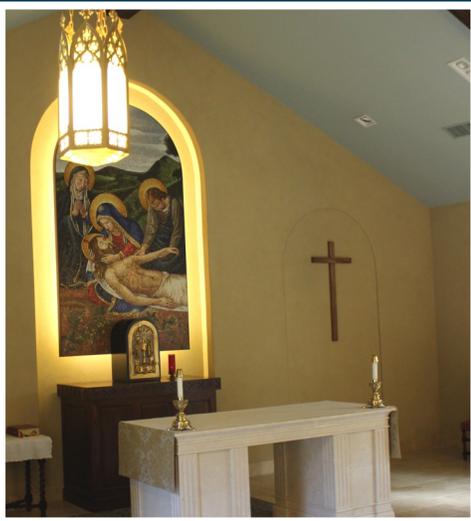


The Three Jars - There are three empty jars in the narthex of the Mother of Compassion Shrine. Above the jars is the inscription, "Be Still and Know That I Am God." (Psalm 46:10) Empty jars wait, in stillness and silence, open and ready to be filled. At the marriage feast of Cana, six jars waited to be filled with water and be transformed into wine. The empty jars invite the visitors to enter into the Shrine in stillness and silence, open and ready to be filled with the life transforming food and drink that the Lord provides.



The Crosses Behind the Altar - There are two crosses on the wall behind the Altar - one with the corpus of Jesus and the other empty. The cross with the corpus of Jesus helps us remember and contemplate Jesus accepting the cross, carrying the cross, being nailed to the cross and dying on the cross for our salvation. When we contemplate Jesus, we are moved to contemplate the cross, and when we contemplate the cross, it is impossible not to be moved to contemplate Jesus dying for our salvation. St. Catherine of Sienna described the cross as the bridge that Jesus laid across the divide between God and humanity. It is a bridge that each one of us must decide to walk or not.

The empty cross is the sign of victory. The cross could not hold Jesus. Death could not hold Him. He was freed from the cross and from death. He rose again. The resurrection of Jesus is what gives meaning and power to the cross. The empty cross reminds us of the resurrection. It is the supreme symbol of God's love. Jesus laid down His life willingly as an act of His love. Jesus said that He was the good shepherd and that He would lay down His life for His sheep. (John 10:14-18) It is the resurrection of Jesus that we contemplate on the empty cross. The cross that was intended to be the ultimate human humiliation has instead led to the ultimate glory of God. The cross that was intended to be the instrument of painful and final death has instead led to the promise of eternal life for all. The empty cross also reminds us of the invitation of Jesus, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)



OUTSIDE THE MOTHER OF COMPASSION SHRINE



Prayer Walk - Journey with Mary through Her Joyful and Sorrowful Moments - In front of the Shrine of the Mother of Compassion is a garden dedicated to Mary, the woman of Grace, the compassionate and contemplative woman. At the center of this garden is the statue of Mary along with a prayer walk focusing on fifteen special moments in the life of Mary. This prayer walk invites visitors to "ponder" the many dimensions of the Divine Word as Mary did. "Moments with Mary" published by Fr. Gus is a book of meditations on the joyful and sorrowful moments in the life of Mary. This book is available for use at the Shrine or for purchase in the Wellspring office or on Amazon.

STEADFAST LOVE

The Webster's Universal Collegiate Dictionary defines "steadfastness" as firmly fixed, not subject to change, firm in belief, determination, loyal and faithful. Dictionary.com defines steadfastness as fixed in direction, steadily directed, firm in purpose, unwavering, firmly established, firmly fixed in place or position.

To be steadfast is to be firm in purpose, resolute, unwavering, tenacious, faithful and loyal just as our God is. Steadfastness is the nature and character of our God. The psalmist tells us that God's love and faithfulness have embraced. His love and fidelity have become one...they have fused into one. He is love and so He cannot but love. It is his nature. It is who He is. God's covenant love is absolutely reliable. His Love is steadfast. (Psalm 85) Steadfast love is unconditional, unconquerable, unfailing, unchanging, constant, enduring, and eternal. This is the nature of covenant love, the nature of God's love and the nature and character of God.

"Steadfast love" is the English translation of "hesed" (or chesed), a Hebrew word used 246 times in the Old Testament. It is primarily used to describe God's love toward us. Hesed is a word unique to Hebrew that combines "love" and "faithfulness" – "hesed and emet." It is hard to capture its full meaning in English. Many words are used to describe hesed – love, kindness, loving kindness, mercy, devotion, benevolence, unwavering love, grace, goodness, favor, tenderness, and faithful love. If we combine all these words, we may get close to its meaning.

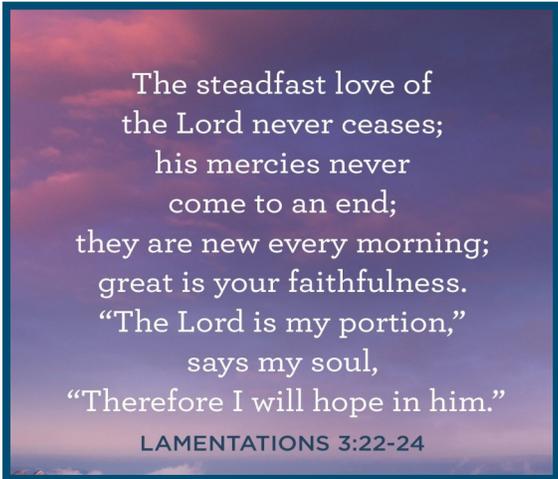
Psalm 85 reflects on "hesed," the steadfast love of God and prays for the renewal of Israel and the restoration of their homeland to which they had just returned. The long journey home from Babylon to Zion was an important part of Israel's history. God had forgiven them and brought them back home from exile and rehabilitated them. God had reason to be angry but has now transformed his anger into "hesed" - loving kindness...steadfast love.

Those who returned from exile were confused and disillusioned and doubts and fears continued to rise, and they began to raise questions: "Is God still angry with us for the same old failures? How could He forgive us for our infidelities?" The psalmist told them that they were listening to wrong voices and called them to listen to the voice of God. God speaks peace to His people, not anger or hatred. God's "hesed and emet" - love and faithfulness - have embraced. His love and fidelity have become one...they have fused into one. He cannot but love. God's covenant love is absolutely reliable. God's love is steadfast. What an amazing discovery this was for Israel!

Discovering the unfailing, steadfast nature of God's covenant love gave the returnees of exile the confidence they needed. They could now sing and shout, "Faithfulness will spring from the ground...the Lord will give what

is good...earth will yield." (Psalm 85) Psalm 23 tells us, "Only goodness and kindness will follow me all the days of my life." This really is the amazing Grace that we must contemplate every day.

In the book of Genesis, chapter 22, we read one of the most challenging and moving stories of steadfast love in practice. Abraham journeyed in faith which was so intense as to surpass human logic. Abraham was called again to do the impossible – to sacrifice his only son, to destroy his only hope for descendants. Abraham obeyed and surrendered. He was determined, resolute, unfailing, tenacious...steadfast in following God's call.



The steadfast love of
the Lord never ceases;
his mercies never
come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
"The Lord is my portion,"
says my soul,
"Therefore I will hope in him."
LAMENTATIONS 3:22-24

As Joshua and his people continued their journey through the Promised Land, many others, who were not part of the exodus movement, joined them. Joshua called all of them together with those who came out of Egypt and offered them the choice of serving the God of Israel or their former gods. Joshua affirmed, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Choosing the God of Israel, the God of the covenant, meant rejection of all false gods. All present followed the choice Joshua proclaimed, "We will serve the Lord, our God." (Joshua 24:1-2, 15-17, 18) Joshua and his people were determined, resolute...steadfast in following God's directives.

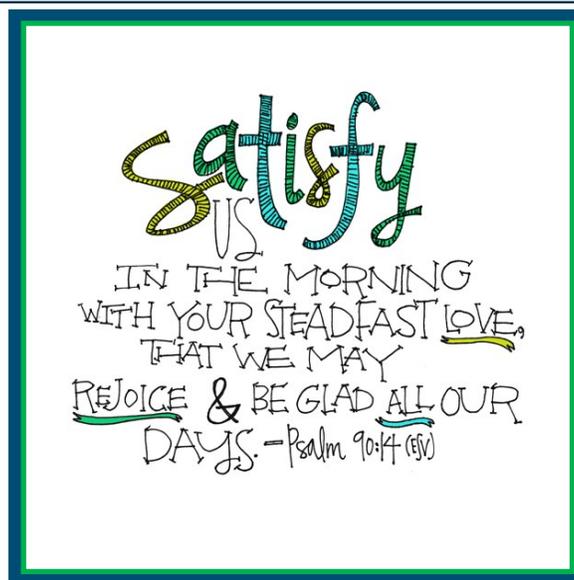
The prophet, Isaiah, proclaimed, "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you. See upon the palm of my hands, I have written your name." (Isaiah 49:15-16) Yes, the Lord is ever faithful and ever mindful...steadfast is His love!

Some of the listeners of Jesus were shocked at the many things that He taught and did. Many of them walked away in protest. Some of them surrendered in faith and accepted the gift Jesus offered although they did not fully understand what was offered to them. Jesus challenged his disciples and asked them whether they too were going to walk away. Peter had great wisdom and courage to say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:60-69) Peter was determined, resolute...steadfast in following his master.

Paul invited the Philippians to be fellow-imitators of Christ. (Philippians 3:17- 4:1) He also encouraged them to remember their calling and be faithful, "You are fellow citizens with the saints. Stand fast in the Lord." To "stand fast" is to be like the soldier "standing fast" in battle with the enemy surging down upon him. To be steadfast is to "stand fast" and that is what we are called to be - "stand fast in the Lord" and be steadfast.

I pray for you, and I pray for all, who are welcoming the gift of this New Year 2023 with all its uncertainties. May God bless you and enable you to experience His steadfast, unfailing, unconquerable and unconditional love. May you learn to love as God does. I pray that you will be steadfast, faithful, loyal and unfailing in all the situations that you encounter. May this New Year be the most amazing, fascinating, marvelous, wonderful and joy-filled year for you and for those you love. May God bless you with the richest and finest of his blessings.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs



"There is nothing little in God; His steadfast love is like Himself - it is infinite. You cannot measure it."

C.H. SPURGEON

WELLSPRING MEANS...

Twenty-five years ago, I witnessed firsthand what it looked like to “not” be in a hurry, to live intentionally with love and compassion, to perform daily activities quietly and purposefully - activities as simple as answering the phone, chopping up vegetables, even taking out the trash. These events became sacred as I observed how I was anything but intentional and calm. Throughout the past 25 years of being connected to Wellspring, I have discovered a quieter presence within, amidst the periodic moments of chaos.

As we celebrate the silver jubilee of the founding of Wellspring, the Wellspring community shares personal experiences of how their lives are different because of Salesian spirituality.

Christina and Josh Loeffler say, “Wellspring is a home away from home, a home that has given us the gift of growing in our faith through a very intentional and meditative approach.” They feel blessed to have a family community, especially with the arrival of their first child.

Yvonne Baum shared, “Going to Wellspring brings a deep sense of peace and helps me re-focus on trusting in God’s plans for my life. I find hope and true peace, something that has been missing for too long.”

Mike Allare makes the drive to Wellspring to hear positive messages from Fr. Gus’ homilies and gains practical insights into how to live with “humility and generosity.” Frances Kane shares how “being still” has become part of her daily routine. She affirms that “the more I do it, the more I need it.”

“Wellspring is such a peaceful place to walk, to pray, to reflect, to gather, and to just be.” says Mark Curry. He adds that it is a place he can retreat to for a few minutes or a few hours, a grace-filled home where I can belong. Mark expresses his gratitude for spiritual guidance, resources for prayerful study, introspection, and meaningful conversation.

Renee and Doug Cordell express their gratitude, as well, for the sense of peace that comes from attending weekly Mass. They describe Wellspring and Fr. Gus as “the instrument” and “the gift” that helps them grow in their faith.

For Walter Bouse, “Wellspring has given me the serenity and sense of peace that I have not experienced before. Fr. Gus speaks to all of us in layman’s terms and not above our comprehension.”



*Tammy & Mark Michaelsen and
Christina & Josh Loeffler*



Kathy McCabe and Betty Daffin

Debby Hubley says that Wellspring brings her faith alive through community and meditation. Similarly, David Saleh describes Wellspring as “a place to pray without distractions.”

“Wellspring is a spiritual haven. I receive nuggets of wisdom each time I hear Fr. Gus speak.” says Betty Daffin. Betty learned to meditate when she first came to Wellspring and she said that it continues to help her be still.

Kara and John Camp began attending Mass at Wellspring during the pandemic. Like many families, the Camps lost loved ones during that time and experienced weddings and graduations that were different than what we have all been used to. They gained strength and comfort from seeing others at Mass each week that were also experiencing

difficulties related to the pandemic. Now they get a peaceful feeling each time they make their way to the shrine at Wellspring and see Fr. Gus waiting at the door to greet them.

There are countless people who have gained strength and wisdom from attending Masses, retreats, and classes at Wellspring, receiving spiritual direction from Fr. Gus, engaging in conversation, walking the grounds, utilizing resources through the library, and learning to meditate and pray in ways that deepen their relationship with God and with others. It is comforting to know that what is being taught at Wellspring is being sent out into the world in big and small ways.

I pray that all of those who have, who are, and who will be a part of Wellspring in the future, will inspire those they meet to be a calm and peaceful presence in the world in which we live. May God continue to bless Fr. Gus, the Fransalians, and the Wellspring Community.

"Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit.

Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset."

St. Francis de Sales

Kathy McCabe



Wellspring Community Members, 1998



Procession of the Fransalian Priests to the Shrine



Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil, Deacon Clarence Blalock, Bishop Strickland, Deacon Ruben Natera and Fr. Gus



Patricia Cussen, Mary Neal, Mary Green and Bari Walker preparing the altar

DEDICATION OF THE MOTHER OF COMPASSION SHRINE

MY MINISTRY AT WELLSRING

I am amazed at the growth of Wellspring as I look through the pictures of 25 years of Wellspring ministry. Wellspring has grown and changed much over the years, but the peace found at Wellspring in those early days is still very present today. I have learned much through the classes and retreats and from the faith of the people that I have met at Wellspring as well as through my ministry with Fr. Gus at Wellspring.

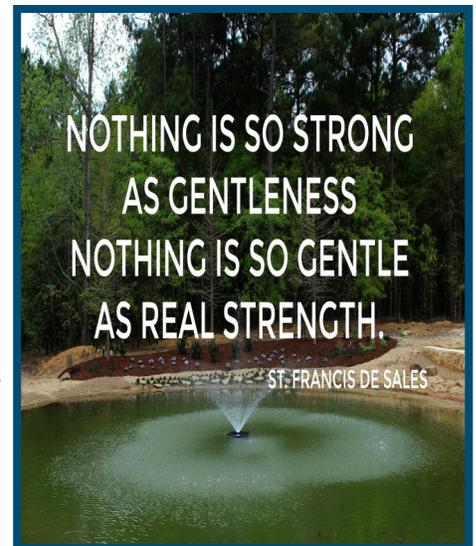
I really believe that much of what I am and who I have become today was formed and shaped by what I have learned at Wellspring. What I have learned about Salesian spirituality has allowed me to approach life differently. I believe that I am kinder and gentler with myself and others because of the teachings of St. Francis de Sales. There are so many expressions and sayings of St. Francis de Sales and Fr. Gus that come to my mind each day as I go about doing my daily chores. When I fail or make mistakes or poor choices or fall short of the ideals that I am striving to live, I can hear Fr. Gus saying, "It's ok. Make a "U" turn and get back on the right path." When I start to feel critical of others, I hear the words of Fr. Gus reminding me to "be generous and think well of others." When I begin to worry, I hear the words of St. Francis de Sales reminding me, "Do not worry about tomorrow. God is with you. What you fear may not happen and if it does, God will give you the strength to bear it."

I have met so many wonderful and faithful people at Wellspring. I am inspired by the faith and service of the Fransalian priests I have met through the years and our dear Fr. Gus' example of living a virtuous life. I am so privileged to have served in ministry here at Wellspring alongside Fr. Gus for the last fourteen years and to have had the opportunity to meet so many faithful and virtuous people.

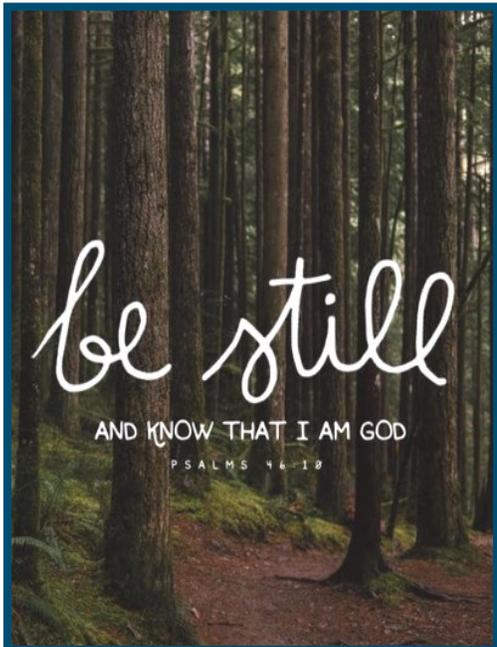
One afternoon last fall as I was working on the Stations of the Cross in the woods, I saw an older gentleman trying to open the door of the shrine. The shrine door is a little bit hard to open and sometimes people mistakenly think it is locked. I saw the man walk away without entering the shrine. I called out to him several times from the distance, but he couldn't hear me. I was busy that day with my project and when I called out to him, and he didn't hear me, I was tempted to just continue my work. But instead, I ran after him, introduced myself, explained that the shrine was unlocked and walked with him back to the shrine. I am so glad I took the time to help him that day. That sweet man is 91 years old and now visits the shrine every Tuesday and Thursday and attends Mass on Sundays at Wellspring. In the short time that he has been coming to Wellspring, he has found peace and joy and calls Wellspring his second home. I look forward to seeing his smile and witnessing his quiet, faithful and prayerful presence each week.

Working at Wellspring has given me the opportunity to meet many individuals who have shared their faith and their love of Wellspring and Fr. Gus with me, and I get emotional thinking of the countless number of individuals who have been touched by Fr. Gus' wisdom and compassion. I have been privileged to get an up close and personal view of Fr. Gus' generosity, compassion and authenticity. I am so thankful that the Lord inspired Fr. Gus with a vision for Wellspring twenty-five years ago and that Fr. Gus has discerned and followed the movement of the Holy Spirit these past twenty-five years. I am very grateful that Fr. Gus has allowed me to have such an active role in ministry here, and I am also grateful for all who have worked to make Wellspring such a wonderful place. Many individuals have freely given of their time, talent and resources to make Wellspring such a special place and it has been wonderful sharing in the work of the Lord at Wellspring. I look forward to the future and can't wait to see how the Lord will continue to work through Fr. Gus and Wellspring to fulfill his plan and purpose for us, his children.

Bari Walker



MOMENTS AT WELLSPRING



I have seen the growth of Wellspring and its ministries from the time of its foundation. I have participated in many of its programs and experienced many opportunities for my spiritual growth. I want to share two of the most significant things that I have learned at Wellspring.

The first is about "Being Still." Twenty-five years ago, when Fr. Gus began his evening classes on spirituality, he introduced the theme of "Being Still." His class started with praying a psalm. The handout had a heading, "Be Still and Know That I am God." He spoke of being still at different times throughout the day. The first exercise he gave us that evening was to sit and be still for one minute. It was a challenge for most of us. The room was full, and people squirmed a bit. It was hard to sit, be still and do nothing. That night before the class was over, he asked us to find time each day to be still for five minutes.

That exercise was difficult for me. It caused me to think about when and where I could and would be still. The ideal place would be in a quiet, dim lit church or chapel. I could see myself kneeling and gazing at the crucifix, taking in the stillness of the moment. But how could I put this "Be Still" exercise into my fast-paced work day? The "Be Still" moments happened easier at church. It took a while to learn, but "Be Still" moments are now part of my ordinary day. I find I can be almost anywhere and take a moment or longer to slow down, be still, quiet my brain chatter and stay focused...knowing that God is with me.

The second is about being steadfast. Over the years, by attending classes and retreats at Wellspring, my faith has opened to see things in new ways. I remember meeting with Fr. Gus several years ago. I could see an intense storm coming my way. Not a storm of high winds and turbulence but a life storm. I shared with Fr. Gus that as a girl from Kansas, I knew what to do when you see the storm coming. You retreat...you head for a storm shelter! Fr. Gus advised me to stand, to be steadfast and to trust in God that He would be with me. That was a hard message for me to hear. I carried Fr. Gus' message with me over many months, and I daily put my trust in God and tried to be steadfast.

Every year Fr. Gus invites Wellspring community and the participants of the various programs to study a virtue that he chooses. A couple of years ago, we studied and meditated on being steadfast. I gained deeper understanding of my call to be steadfast. Some days are full of blessings and joys and other days are full of sadness, difficulties and challenges. We are called to embrace each day and go forward, trusting God in all that we do.

*"The same everlasting Father who cares for you today will care for you tomorrow and every day.
He will shield you from suffering or give you unfailing strength to bear it.
Be at peace then and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings."*

St. Francis de Sales

Wellspring has taught me to keep going, to be resolute, and be steadfast without giving into discouragements. I am grateful to Wellspring for teaching me to be still and be steadfast.

Patricia Cussen

OUR FAVORITE
Virtue
QUOTES

COMPASSION IS NOT A DOCTRINE. IT IS THE DEEPEST AND MOST MEANINGFUL EXPRESSION OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD AND NEIGHBOR
COMPASSION - 2005

HOPE IS A DYNAMIC FORCE THAT EMPOWERS US TO WALK IN FAITH EVEN WHEN THINGS ARE NOT WORKING OUT AS PLANNED
HOPE - 2003

Gentleness enables us to choose a different way, different path, and different approach when the chosen way does not work out
GENTLENESS - 2015

MERCY IS LOVING THOSE WHO CAN NOT LOVE IN RETURN AND THOSE WHO CAN NOT LOVE THE WAY WE HAVE LEARNED TO LOVE
MERCY - 2016

Peacefulness is a force that empowers you to tolerate and transcend differences.
PEACEFULNESS - 2010

JUSTICE MEANS THAT WE GIVE OTHERS THE HONOR THAT IS DUE TO THEM
JUSTICE - 2004

STILLNESS MEANS LETTING GO OF THE INNER CHATTER AND OPENING OUR WHOLE BEING TO GOD WHO IS BEYOND AND YET WITHIN
STILLNESS - 2020

IT TAKES A GREAT DEAL OF COURAGE TO STAND UP TO OUR ENEMIES, BUT IT TAKES JUST AS MUCH COURAGE TO STAND UP TO OUR FRIENDS
COURAGE - 2014

it is not success that brings fulfillment. it is faithfulness
FAITHFULNESS - 2007

OPTIMISM - 2008
optimism is not wishful thinking. it is a confident and faithful walk into the mystery of tomorrow

Prayerfulness is having no thought in our mind and no desire in our heart but God and God's way
PRAYERFULNESS - 2009

ABUNDANCE AND LACK EXIST SIMULTANEOUSLY IN OUR LIVES. WHEN WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE ABUNDANCE, WE LOSE SIGHT OF WHAT WE LACK
GRATEFULNESS - 2021

BEING GENEROUS
CALLS US TO RETHINK OUR NEEDS, DOWNSIZE OUR APPETITES AND SHARE WITH THE NEEDY
GENEROSITY - 2018

joy springs from within. no one makes you joyful. you choose to be joyful
JOYFULNESS - 2011

SIMPLE PEOPLE DON'T HAVE THE BEST OF EVERYTHING. THEY JUST MAKE THE BEST OF WHAT THEY HAVE
SIMPLICITY - 2022

HOSPITALITY IS NOT ABOUT INVITING PEOPLE INTO OUR PERFECT LIVES IT IS ALL ABOUT INVITING PEOPLE INTO OUR IMPERFECT HEARTS
HOSPITALITY - 2019

GRACEFULNESS ENABLES US TO CHANGE OUR ATTITUDE WHEN WE CAN'T CHANGE OUR SITUATION.
GRACEFULNESS—2013

BE WISE AND SEEK GOD'S HAND IN ALL YOUR EXPERIENCES
NOT JUST THOSE THAT PLEASE YOU
WISDOM - 2006

"Spiritual Moments" is published each year by Wellspring, Fransalian Center for Spirituality. Its main purpose is to share "spiritual moments" and articles on various aspects of spirituality along with information on programs and events at Wellspring. It is circulated, primarily, among the many volunteers, participants, friends and wells-wishers of Wellspring and the Fransalian Missionaries.
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