

April 2022

# Community Newsletter

Thrive For Life

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## GOSPEL

John 20:1-9

## OTHER READINGS

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Colossians 3:1-4

## MONTHLY EXAMEN

We invite you to prayerfully reflect:

### *Presence*

Become aware that God's presence is active at each moment of your life, looking at you with love, desirous of speaking directly to your heart. How do you feel at this moment?

### *Ask*

Ask God for the grace to see the ways God is working in your life.

### *Gratitude*

Be grateful. Thank God for the gifts, both big and small of the day.  
What are you most grateful for today?

### *Review*

Trust that God is with you at each moment of day, during the good and challenging moments. God never abandons you.

What were the good moments of today?  
What were the greatest challenges of today?

### *Respond*

You are not stuck. Tomorrow is a new day. Ask God to give you the grace to be the loving and generous person you were created to be.  
What can you do tomorrow to be more generous and loving?

*Conclude with the Sign of the Cross.*



## FORGIVEN, EVEN IN PAIN

During this month of April, we as Christians remember the death and Resurrection of Jesus. The Gospels are full of stories about these events. Particularly this story is rich in wisdom for people going through difficult times.

The Gospel of Luke tells us that two other men were crucified next to Jesus (Luke 23: 39-43). One of them mocked Jesus for not using supernatural powers to get them all down from the cross. The other, named Dismas, had a very different attitude. He expressed deep sorrow for the crime he had committed. He somehow knew that Jesus was the Son of God and asked him for forgiveness. Jesus responded with love and assured Dismas of God's mercy and favor, telling him, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

However, after this conversation with Jesus, Dismas remained on the cross for a time. God did not end his suffering immediately. We don't know why that is! But even in his pain, Jesus's words assured Dismas that God loved him and would give him the strength to persevere until he was called into Heaven. Sometimes we are tricked into believing that our own pain, our own lack of freedom, must mean that God has rejected us. But this is not true! Remember, like Dismas, that God is very close to those who suffer. Just wanting to be forgiven is holy and pleasing to God! He gives us His mercy like a constant waterfall. All we can do is respond in gratitude and confident hope.

*R. Lorenz, Jesuit Scholastic at Ciszek Hall,  
Fordham University*



**FROM WATER INTO WINE**

**MOMENTS OF TRANSFORMATION AND HEALING IN CORONA, QUEENS**

In the gospel of John, we read that Jesus went to a wedding with all his friends and relatives. There, Mary presents to Jesus a very human problem: “They have no wine.” Surprisingly, Jesus asks for water. In other words, Jesus approaches a human problem with total lack of what we can call “common sense”. Didn’t he know making wine requires grapes and a very long time?

Our lives are very similar: When we have a problem, get sick, go through periods of suffering, we come up with humanly logical solutions; but God often has a different approach. Where we see water, where we see no solution to our problems, when we feel stuck or abandoned, God sees wine. God doesn’t see us as water, as a problem, or incomplete or insufficient; God sees you and me as wine, full of life, with color and flavor, capable of bringing joy into our own life and the lives of others.

When we can’t see the solution to our problems or the end to our sufferings, Jesus asks us to trust as Mary and the servants did when He asked for water. Jesus asks you and me to trust, to open our heart and accept that God has our lives under his loving care, even when we don’t see a solution or understand how it may happen. I invite you to entrust your life to God and place it in his hands. Let’s trust in God so he continues transforming our reality from water into wine.

*P. Jimenez, Thrive For Life Companion*

On March 20th, more than 200 people gathered at Our Lady of Sorrows, in Corona, Queens, for the first Day of Prayer for Our Incarcerated Brothers and Sisters sponsored by Thrive For Life. Participants learned about Thrive’s mission and history, and listened to testimonies of people with loved ones behind walls and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Continuing in the tradition of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Fr. Zach Presutti, SJ, guided the attendees in a meditative examen to remember moments in which God has healed and transformed their lives, acknowledging and giving thanks for God’s presence in their everyday life. Then, Fr. Zach anointed the forehead and hands of the participants, while Thrive For Life volunteers gave each one of them a rosary. These rosaries are the same kind that our brothers and sisters behind walls receive after attending a Thrive For Life retreat. These rosaries symbolize the prayerful and loving union of the Thrive For Life family, both behind and beyond prison walls.

Fr. Zach and all the Thrive For Life staff is very thankful to all the participants, the volunteers, as well as to Bishop Robert Brennan, the pastors and parishes in Corona, East Elmhurst and Jackson Heights for their continuous support and hospitality. With them, Thrive For Life has successfully started a new chapter in our mission to transform lives behind and beyond prison walls.

**BECOME A RESIDENT SCHOLAR AT IGNACIO HOUSE OF STUDIES!**

If you are passionate about your education and wish to continue your academic journey post-release, Ignacio House offers transitional supportive housing along with a holistic suite of services for formerly incarcerated students. Find a sense of purpose and overcome barriers to employment, housing, and education.

Interested in joining? Send the following to our contact information at the top of this page:

- Full name & DIN number •
- Current college you are enrolled in and/or where you will study post-release •
- Contact information for college/university where you will study •