



for
from



of

Walter
Ciszek S.J.

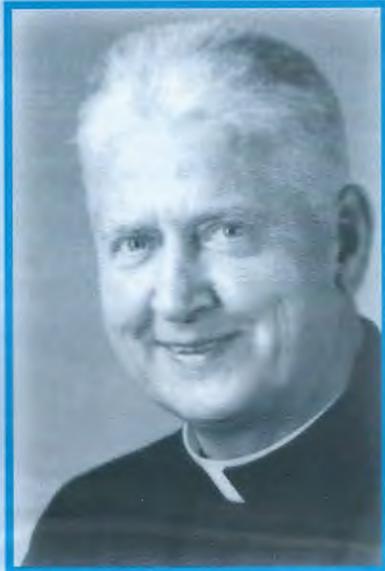
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2015 Issue IV

Read newsletter online
www.ciszek.org

Loyola Press to Publish *With God in America*

The Father Walter Ciszek, S.J. Prayer League is happy to announce that Loyola Press in Chicago (loyolapress.com) will be publishing a new volume of Father Ciszek's writings entitled *With God in America*. This is the first time that most of these writings will have appeared in print to the public and will follow Father Ciszek's life and spiritual teachings from the time he arrived back in the United States from the Soviet Union, to the time of his death. The writings in this collection were selected, edited, and introduced by Fr. Marc Lindeijer, S.J., Assistant Postulator General of the Society of Jesus, and John M. DeJak, an attorney and longtime educator. The writings in this volume include Father's retreat meditations, select correspondence with spiritual directees and friends, reflections on his life, and counsel to people of all walks of life. It also includes reminiscences of those who were close to him and who knew him best. The book gives further insight as to Father's heroic virtue and his kindness to all people. Finally, this volume is sure to inspire further devotion to Father. Ciszek and—as Father Ciszek himself would prefer—further love of Our Lord. Stay tuned for more details as to publication date and availability for purchase!



PRAYER FOR A FAVOR THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF FATHER WALTER CISZEK, S.J.

Almighty God, we love, adore and praise You as our Creator and Loving Father. Look with compassion and mercy upon us. Hear our prayer in this time of special need and through the intercession of Father Walter Ciszek, grant the following favor if it is Your Holy Will.

(Mention the Request)

Most loving God, accept our gratitude for hearing this prayer. May the knowledge of the virtues and holiness of Father Walter be recognized and known to provide a lasting example to draw sinners to reconciliation and to lead souls to sanctity.

For You are our God and we are Your people and we glorify You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Please inform the Prayer League of any special favors from Father Walter Ciszek.

"Because of His Love, We Came!"

— Sister Lucille



See page 4 & 5 for
Father Walter Ciszek Day 2015 Celebration

prayer hotline

DECEASED: Berenice

HEALTH: daughter's physical and mental healing, Margaret Mary, healing of rheumatoid arthritis, Sheila, Susan, Margie, complete healing from pain

SPECIAL INTENTIONS: Brian, Strength and courage to do God's Will, conversion of Matthew, Nick and all friends, Nephew to become clean and sober, my husband to become nonviolent, our family with the lost of daughter, Maite and family, For the families who lost their children in the blast at City Kinara

For all members of the Prayer League living and deceased.

For all whose names were previously on our list, but who are still in need of our prayers; for all those who have requested prayers of the League; for all prayer league members, for all those who are praying through the intercession of Father Walter Ciszek; and for all who need our prayers.



We are now on Facebook!
www.facebook.com/FatherWalterCiszek

"For/From the Friends of Walter Ciszek, S.J."

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By Rev. Thomas J. Sable, S.J.

Beginning and Beginning Anew

St. Ignatius Loyola, towards the beginning of his Spiritual Exercises, gives us a two-fold concept which he calls the Principle and Foundation. "Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man that they may help him in attaining the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use them as much as they help him on to his end, and ought to rid himself of them so far as they hinder him. For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it; so that, on our part, we want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, long rather than short life, and so all the rest; desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created."

This is the answer to the question: "What is the meaning of life?" or to the other question: "Why am I here?" These questions and Ignatius' concept give us a sense that there is a greater purpose and meaning to life than simply ourselves. From exploring these questions we gradually come to a sense of our own creaturehood. When we let go of our sense of superiority, we come to realize that true love of self only comes from love of God and love of neighbor. The measure of our love of God is our awareness of God's love for us. God lets us know in little ways each day in the circumstances of our lives what is required of us. Jesus attests to this: *Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.*

On hearing Christ's voice, we open the door to receive him, as it were, when we freely assent to his promptings and when we give ourselves over to doing what must be done. Christ, since he dwells in the hearts of his chosen ones through the grace of his love, enters so that he might eat with us and we with him. He ever refreshes us by the light of his presence insofar as we progress in our devotion to and longing for the things of heaven. He himself is delighted by such a pleasing banquet.

Father Walter Ciszek had to struggle with the difficult circumstances of his prison life every day and he learned to let go of his sense of self-determination. In those moments of interrogation when all seemed lost, he found God's will by letting go. When he refused the request of the interrogator to become a spy in Rome, he was no longer bound by his own fears, but left everything in the hands of God.

Each day we are called to begin anew in what might seem like the ordinary circumstances of our lives. We must attune our ears to listen for that knock on the door of our heart.

Father Paris speaks of Father Cizek surrendering life to God

By John E. Usalis

Reprinted with permission Standard Speaker

SHENANDOAH — Surrendering one's life to God completely was a major theme of the message on Sunday by the Rev. Michael Paris as the guest homilist at the 31st annual Father Walter Cizek Mass in Shenandoah.

The annual Mass, which commemorates the life and death of Father Cizek, had about 200 people attending in the St. Casimir Church sacred worship site of Divine Mercy Roman Catholic Parish in Shenandoah. St. Casimir's is the home parish of Cizek, whose cause for canonization is being investigated by the Catholic Church.

As Mass began, reader Cynthia Nowak greeted the congregation and said, "We have gathered to give glory to God for Father Cizek's life of love and faith in God's providence and his kindness to all people. We pray the the Church will recognize him (Cizek) officially for the saint he was."

The main celebrant was Monsignor Ronald C. Bocian, pastor. Concelebrants were Paris and the Rev. Johnson Kochuparambil, parochial vicar of Divine Mercy Church who also serves in the parish's Hispanic ministry.

A priest of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., Paris is the youngest of seven children and grew up in Columbia, Maryland. He studied in minor seminary in Scranton and New York, and completed his theological studies at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. He encountered the writings of Father Cizek through his spiritual director in college seminary, the Rev. Jeffrey Walsh, who was the guest homilist at the 2014 Cizek Day Mass.

Paris was ordained a priest in 2011 and spent his first four years at St. Patrick Church in Rockville, Maryland. This past summer he was assigned as the assistant chaplain to the University of Maryland and George Washington University.

"I have been coming here for the last several years since I was a seminarian and I got to be a dear friend with Sister Doris (Burkot, OSF), and she e-mailed me a few months ago and asked if I would preach," Paris said. "First of all, there had to be a lot of people to say no before they asked me. But I can't believe that I would be here to preach, and I am very honored to preach in honor of Father Cizek.

To quote Father Walter, I will do my lousy best."

Paris pointed out that the Sunday liturgical readings line up so well with the celebration. He said the first message was about redemption in the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

"Isn't that the experience of Father Walter. He goes to the lands of the north, he suffers great hardship, and then he journeys to the ends of the earth by pretty much going to the ends of human endurance — almost to death," Paris said. "But then God puts him on this level path and brings him back rejoicing."

Paris quoted Cizek in "He Leadeth Me": "I am convinced that God taught me these lessons not for myself alone, but so I could be a help to others."

He continued, "Father Walter's experience teaches us that we can take our own sufferings, whatever struggles we go through, whatever the daily difficulties we have that sometimes lead us to ends of what we think we can endure, and we can let God's grace transform them to a level path — to brooks of refreshing water by learning to trust and surrender to His will."

Paris said Cizek has been a great spiritual guide through the years and he was pleased to be able to share the day with the other friends of "Father Walter." He said he was a bit like Cizek when he was growing up.

"As a teenager and young man back in Maryland, I got into a lot of trouble in many ways and was very far from God, very far from His Church," Paris said. "In some ways I wasn't too different from young Father Walter, who we read about, except he was probably much cooler than I was. I know Father Walter prowled the mean streets of Shenandoah with his little gang. He thought he was real tough. I thought I was pretty cool, pretty tough, and I did basically whatever I wanted, and I pretty much made a complete wreck of my life by the time I was 18. It was only then that I discovered my need for Jesus and was given the gift of conversion. There was a great quote I read a few months back on Twitter, that great spiritual reading source, that said, Sometimes you have to hit rock bottom to discover that God is the rock at the

continued on page 7



Father Michael Paris homily on Father Cizek Day 2015

Good Afternoon! My name is Father Michael Paris. I am a priest of the Archdiocese of Washington DC. I've been coming for this event since I was a seminarian and I feel very blessed and somewhat intimidated to be here and preach in honor of Father Cizek. To quote Father Walter though, I will do my "lousy best."

It's amazing how the readings from Mass can line up so well with what we are celebrating. The first reading is all about redemption from exile, where God says "I will bring them back from the land of the north, from the ends of the earth. I will console and guide them, will lead them to brooks of water, to a level road..." Isn't that the experience of Father Cizek? He goes to the lands of the North and suffers great hardship. He journeys to the ends of the earth by going almost to the end of human endurance, almost to death. But God puts him on a level path and brings him back rejoicing. He is led to brooks of refreshing water through abandonment to the will of God revealed in the concrete moments of each day.

And, like the responsorial psalm says, he comes back carrying the fruit of what he went through – so he could give it to us! Father writes "I am convinced that God taught me these lessons not for myself alone, but so that I could be of help to others" Father Walter's experiences teach us that we can take the sufferings and daily difficulties which sometimes lead us to the very ends of what we think we can endure – and let God's grace transform them into a level path, to brooks of refreshing water by learning to surrender to His will.

In my own life, Father Cizek taught me this truth right when I needed it the most. As a teenager I got into a lot of trouble and became very far from God and the Church. I was not too different from the young Father Walter, except he was probably much cooler. Like Father Walter who prowled the mean streets of Shenandoah with his little gang, so I too thought I was real cool and basically did whatever I wanted. I had pretty much made a complete wreck of my life by the age of 18. It was only then that I discovered my need for Jesus and I was given the gift of conversion. There was a quote I read a few months back on Twitter, that great spiritual reading source, that said, 'Sometimes you have to hit rock bottom to discover that God is the rock at the bottom'. And I can say that is very true in my own life. Two years later I found myself in seminary and went to the opposite extreme, I wanted very much to make myself holy, to repair the damage of my previous life, but I didn't fully trust in the grace of God. I had so many fears and anxieties, how I could ever be a good priest?

In the midst of my greatest crisis in seminary was the time of our annual retreat. I brought along a book I had been given called, *He Leadeth Me*. Reading it, I was so blown away by his story. I found someone in Father Cizek who suffered more than I could imagine. Whatever my worst fear was, was nothing compared to what he actually went through. No matter what the difficulty was, he could see it as God's will for him in the moment. Like blind Bartimaeus in the Gospel today, Jesus took away the blindness of wilfulness, fear, and self-doubt that afflicted Father Cizek in Lubianka. And Christ gave him new eyes. He found his path to God in surrendering to Him through each and every situation he found himself in. My own joy and peace abounded as I discovered this new path Father Cizek describes so well. I wept as I read his description of his own moment of conversion, after he gave in to the interrogator's demands and was near total despair: "I chose consciously and willingly, to abandon myself to God's will, to let go of every last reservation... There was but one single vision: God, who was all in all, one will that directed all things, God's will – to discern this in every situation... To see his will in all things, is to let oneself be borne along in perfect confidence and trust... to float serenely upon the tide of God's sustaining Providence in perfect peace of soul." (HLM p.83)

This meant that I, too, could let go. Father Cizek's vision helped rescue me from my fears and self doubt. And after meeting Father Walter I floated serenely, more or less, on the tide leading me to priesthood.

I heard once that when Father Walter was asked to sum up his spirituality, he quoted an antiphon from the liturgy of the hours "Surrender to God and he will do everything for you". Let's remind ourselves again and again of this truth. The sorrows of our life, the way we become prisoners of fear and doubt, do not have to have control over us. Each moment in our life, especially our cross, is willed by God and if we surrender to him, he will take us by the hand and make us exactly who he wants us to be. Not that we can always feel this, but to discover God's

will in each situation we find ourselves in, leads to the deepest peace and fulfillment found this side of heaven. As Father Walter says... "What can trouble the soul that accepts every moment of every day as a gift from the hands of God and strives always to do his will?... No one can know greater peace... no one can achieve a greater sense of fulfillment in this life than one who believes in this truth of faith and strives daily to put it into practice." (HLM 207-8)

All of us friends of Father Ciszek have a chance today to renew our commitment to following the path he laid out. The path that he worked and suffered so much to learn in order to pass it on to us. May we accept this vision of God which will replace our blindness. It will bring us back from the northern lands of fear, self-doubt, and discouragement, and bring us home rejoicing to the Brooks of water found in complete surrender to God's loving Will. Amen.



Left to right: Rev. Michael Paris, Msgr. Ronald Bocian, main celebrant, Rev. Johnson Kochuparambil



Ciszek Family attending Father Ciszek Day 2015
Left to right: John Hopko, Justine Richards, Mila Magyar, Larry Magyar, Mary Ann Hendry and Gordon Hendry.



Sister Doris thanking Tony Kielbasa (left) for the box of items (correspondences, newspaper clippings and photos) given to the Prayer League his Mother, the late Anna Kielbasa had collected regarding Father Ciszek.

Raffle Winners

\$500 - Mark Winek
Donated back \$100
to Prayer League

\$250 - Juanita Radziewicz

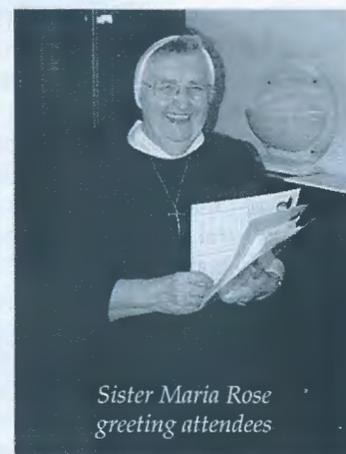
**\$100 - Bob and Maryann
Taborowsky**

\$50 - William Gambill
Donated back to Prayer League

\$25 - Fred Feldkircher
Donated back to Prayer League



Sister Maryann
and Elaine Cusat
drawing raffle
winners.



Sister Maria Rose
greeting attendees



Social gathering after Liturgy

Article-Review

Archdiocese of Newark Diaconate Candidate - Retreat June 2015

Theme: He Leadeth Me (based on Father Walter Ciszek's book)

In June 2015, 25 permanent deacon candidates and their wives of the Archdiocese of Newark gathered for their annual weekend retreat at St. Mary's Abbey in Morristown, NJ. Led by Dianne Traflet, J.D., S.T.D., Associate Dean and Deacon Andy Saunders, M.A., Director of the Center for Diaconal Formation, Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology at Seton Hall University, the retreat focused on He Leadeth Me by Father Walter Ciszek, S.J.

Participants were led on a spiritual journey reflecting on Father Walter Ciszek's unwavering faith and his hope and love for others as expressed through his meditation on the Our Father prayer and in his great devotion to the Eucharist. These themes are particularly important for deacons whose service at the altar of the Eucharist flows into their ministry of service and charity in their love of both God and neighbor. Ciszek's deep faith and trust in God which enabled him to serve others in difficult circumstances, despite great personal sacrifice, is an example and model for deacons who are ordained and configured to Christ in his servant role. Participants learned to appreciate more deeply the Lord's Prayer, and were reminded of God's great love for them as shown through Ciszek's complete trust and surrender to God's will.

Some of the experiences articulated by the participants from the retreat included:

"After reading "He Leadeth Me" what struck me about Father Ciszek were his unconditional witness of faith, hope, and love. His true belief in Divine providence, his trust that the Lord's will was there to sustain him at every turn, and his Christlike love of everyone who he came in contact with was evident throughout. I was so impacted by his gentle and humble spirit as he recounted what must have been a living hell. I still cannot fathom the punishment that he went through and his pure trust in God that enabled him to survive. His mission was to save souls which he most certainly did and continues to do today by leaving us his example to reflect upon. As I read his chapter on The Our Father it gave me a completely different perspective of what had frankly come to be a quickly said prayer instead of the most powerful dialogue with our Heavenly Father. Worth rereading and prayerful reflection. "The retreat had many special moments but the insights specific to He Leadeth Me, for me were very specific. For me the lesson about PRIDE hit home. To rely on one's own ability, whatever it is, just isn't enough. Surrender to the will of God requires

humility and docility. These are counter to everything I've been taught by this society and it is difficult to shed the armor of pride and self-reliance, but it must be done. Surrender coupled with sacramental confession, coupled with prayer, is the only real way to find 'His way' for us. Surrender+confession+prayer=God's will for each of us=His peace."

"Within a recurring context of seeking understanding of God's Providence in all things, Fr. Ciszek was nevertheless saddened at times that he was not in a position to act as a Priest. What he could not have guessed was that in God's Providence Father Ciszek would be ministering as a Priest to me in New Jersey in 2015. He has given me the gift of spiritual nourishment and by God's Grace and his own faith he has transcended time and space in doing so. I hope that he somehow knows that now in God's Kingdom. Thank you, Father!"

"Our diaconate retreat was beautifully led by Dr. Dianne Traflet and Deacon Andy Saunders. We are grateful for their wisdom by introducing us to a priest whose life commitment to God truly is remarkable. They guided us on Fr. Walter Ciszek's key messages that will help us on our spiritual journey. They provided us a framework to model our lives on and to share our blessings with others.

Fr. Ciszek's incredible story of faith, courage, compassion, strength, hope, humility, and love resonated in me and my wife, Tessie. We felt his pain but we never thought that God would abandon him especially during his darkest moments. He transmitted joy in the simplest activities because he offered them to God. This humble priest enlightened us on conversational prayer and how important it is to keep open that communication with God. This man of faith has inspired both of us to always believe in God even though we may feel inadequate in our own faith. We will pray for Fr. Ciszek's canonization."



Father Walter Ciszek Prayer League thanks the 2016 Diaconate Formation Class for their generous donation to the Prayer League in honor of their retreat leaders Dr. Dianne Traflet and Deacon Andrew Saunders

Father Paris speaks of Father Ciszek *continued*

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bottom. And I can say that is very true in my own life."

Two years later, Paris entered the seminary and wanted to make himself holy and repair the damage of his previous life.

"But I didn't truly trust in the grace of God and I had so many fears and anxieties," he said. "How could I be a good priest?"

In his third year of minor seminary in New York, Paris attended a retreat and his spiritual director recommended "He Leadeth Me."

"While reading at that retreat, I was so blown away. I couldn't believe it," Paris said. "I found someone in Father Ciszek who suffered more than I could imagine. Whatever my worst fear was was nothing compared to what he actually went through. No matter what the difficulty was, he was able to find God's will in that moment and trust that God would give him everything he needed. And He did, and it worked. Like that blind Bartimaeus in the Gospel today, Jesus took away the blindness of willfulness, of fear, of self-doubt that really afflicted Father Ciszek in Lubianka. He found his path to God by simply surrendering to Him and trusting Him through each and every moment in the situation he found himself in. And my own joy and peace just abounded on that retreat as I discovered this new path that I didn't know about and that Father Ciszek described so well."

Father Ciszek was born Nov. 4, 1904, in Shenandoah. He was ordained in 1937 as the first American Jesuit in the Byzantine Catholic Rite. He secretly entered the Soviet Union in 1939 as a missionary priest and was arrested in 1941 as a Vatican spy. He was imprisoned, accused of espionage, trapped in the Moscow prison of Lubianka during all of World War II, and sentenced to 15 years of forced labor in the prison camps of Siberia.

After 23 years as a prisoner in the Soviet Union, he was released with another prisoner and returned to the United States in 1963 after being exchanged for two Russian spies. In addition to "He Leadeth Me," Father Ciszek also wrote "With God in Russia." He died Dec. 8, 1984. His cause for canonization began in the Ruthenian

Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic and was later transferred to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown. His cause has reached the stage that it is currently being reviewed in the Vatican.

The annual Ciszek Day is a spiritual remembrance by The Father Walter Ciszek Prayer League, which is the official organization for the promotion of the cause of canonization of Father Ciszek. The prayer league works for the promotion of the cause through prayers and the living out of Father Ciszek's spiritual message of the acceptance of the will of God in vibrant faith.

Before Mass concluded, Bocian thanked the prayer league for its annual tradition in donating \$5,000 to the Diocese of Allentown to defray costs involved in the canonization process.

After Mass, everyone was invited by Bocian to the church hall for food and fellowship, along with the drawing of winners from a raffle. Paris stopped in and enjoyed the food and conversation. The prayer league sold books, prayer cards, CDs and other items, with the money used for the canonization cause. The Byzantine Carmelite sisters at Holy Annunciation Monastery, which Father Ciszek helped found in Sugarloaf near Hazleton, had their homemade white and other breads and jams and jellies brought down from the monastery for sale.

Anyone interested in learning more about Ciszek and the prayer league can visit www.ciszek.org. Annual membership is \$10 (application can be downloaded). Membership requires:

- The daily recitation of an Our Father and Hail Mary for the cause.
- A striving in one's personal life to be a witness of living faith through acceptance of the will of God as manifested in daily life.
- Promoting the cause by making the life works and message of Father Ciszek more widely known.
- Supporting the cause financially, if possible. All members will receive the newsletter, "For and From the Friends of Father Walter J. Ciszek, S.J."