

God's desire is that we come to Him ... through His Son!

Did you get your **Girl Scout cookies** this year?

I sure did! **In early February** I bought a box of **almost every flavor** they offer ... because **not only** are they good to eat ... they make **good gifts** too ...

I sent several boxes to my **nieces and nephews** in Chicago for **Valentine's Day!**

The **Girl Scouts** are a very ambitious bunch ... they go out promoting their cookies **many places** ... offering their products by **going door to door**. ... or marketing them to **Parishioners** at Church and even to **the general Public** outside of **Wal-Mart**.

So there are **many locations** for you to see their products ... **but** there is **only one way** for you to get them ... **that's** by buying them... from a Girl Scout!

You can't order them right from **the Baking Company**.

You can't order them from a **Parent**.

You have to order them from a **Girl Scout**.

That's how the program works. There's no going around it.

This design actually brings great joy to **the Parents** as they see ...
people coming to their girls ... and getting special gifts from them.

Well, **the process** in place for acquiring Girl Scout cookies ...
is representative of another process in place for acquiring
something even more profound and **precious** than delicious cookies.

For you see, **all of us** are created with an appetite for **God** ...

we're made to be with Him in Heaven one day.

And **God** has designed the process of satisfying our appetite for Him...

of acquiring Eternal Life with Him ...

and **the way** that we do it is by going through his Son ... and only through His Son.

Just as **your desire** for **Girl Scout cookies** can only be met by going to a Girl Scout,

Your desire for **Eternal Life** can only be met by going to Jesus.

The way that **we** receive the great gift of salvation ... is through His Son.

It gives the Father great pleasure to see people coming to His Son for the gift.

That's His design. **That's the way it works.** **There's no going around it.**

You want Eternal Life?

There's no going direct to **the Father**. There's no going to **someone else**.

You have to go through Jesus ... **the only Son of the Father!**

Eternal Life is God's Gift ... and he's free to distribute it **however He pleases.**

And it pleases Him to distribute that Gift ... through His Son.

Listen again to how St. John describes it in our Gospel:

He declares **the necessity of belief in Jesus ... 5 times in 4 verses!**

Jesus said, *“So must the Son of Man be lifted up,
so that everyone who believes in him may have ...
what, ... **Girl Scout cookies?** No, ... may have **Eternal Life!**”*

Again He says,

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son,
so that everyone who believes in him might not perish
but might have **Eternal Life.**”*

And then again,

*“Whoever believes in him will not be condemned,
but whoever does not believe has already been condemned,
because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”*

What does it take to get to **Heaven?** You must believe in God's only begotten Son!

Wow! Think of **all the people** walking around today who don't believe in Jesus.

Think of **all those people** who are not baptized.

And think of **those** who were baptized **but** are not following the **teachings of Jesus**.

Think of those who are **Atheists** and are adamantly opposed to Jesus' name.

Think of all **the world religions** that don't acknowledge Jesus as Savior & Lord ...

with some, like **ISIS**, the Islamic State, who is violently persecuting Christians!

Can you see how much work there is to be done? **A lot!**

Which is **why Pope Francis** is calling all of us to play a part in the work of evangelization ... of spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ ...

so that all will come to believe in His Name.

St. John has made this especially clear.

But just in case you need more clarity ...

St. Paul also speaks of God's design for salvation in his letter to the **Ephesians**.

He too says that **salvation is a gift we receive ... only through Jesus!**

In the short span of 6 verses, Paul states 4 times ...

that salvation is through, with ... and in ... Jesus Christ ...

the very words I say at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer:

Through Him, with Him and in Him ...

*O God, Almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours, forever and ever. Amen.*

Today, Paul says,

“Even when we were dead in our transgressions, (God) brought us to life with Christ.

He goes on,

(God) raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus.”

*“that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace
in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”*

*“For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has
prepared in advance, that we should live in them”*

Belief in Jesus is the answer.

What’s the question? How do we get to Heaven?

We get to Heaven by turning away from sin and turning to Jesus Christ.

Sin is opposed to a life in Jesus Christ.

Sin, it’s always been part of the human condition.

In our **First reading from **2nd Chronicles**,**

we hear of **the misbehavior of the people living in 500 BC.**

*“In those days, the princes, the priests and the people added infidelity to infidelity,
practicing all the abominations of the nations ...*

“They mocked the messengers of God.”

“The land (was a land o)f lost Sabbaths.”

Wow. That happened in 500 B.C. ... sure sounds a lot like the year 2015 AD!

Infidelity ... with Adultery and Divorce running rampant today.

Abominations with homosexual behavior being endorsed as the “*new normal*”.

In this Country, many now approve it, parade it, and want to legalize it and bless it!

Mockery ... with lawsuits and intolerance for any speech or symbols of God.

**Lost Sabbaths ... with so many churches falling empty ...
and so many people working and shopping on Sunday.**

Yes, **the sins of old** are still with us today ... with **much greater prevalence!**

What's God doing about it?

The same thing He did in **500 B.C.** ... He's patiently calling us ...
through **His word** & the **Ministers** of His Church ... to turn back to Him.

All four readings from Scripture today refer to God's incredible patience and compassion in dealing with all of us ... **His wayward children.**

In **2nd Chronicles** we heard, "*Early and often did the Lord, the God of their fathers, send his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people.*"

We definitely have a **patient** God ...

His first desire is to pardon those who have offended Him.

But there's a limit to **His patience**. So **when** the people of that time refused to listen, God allowed them to be taken into slavery by the **Babylonians**.

But after that long period, known as the **Babylonian Exile**, the **Chosen People** were given another chance to start over and begin again a loving relationship with God. .

This occurred when **King Cyrus**, King of Persia, set them free from captivity and allowed them to return to the holy city of **Jerusalem** and reoccupy the **Temple**.

What a **happy time** for the people! Many **Psalms** refer to **the joy** they felt in having the **chance** to have **their Temple** back and **their way life** restored!

But sadly, **the Chosen People** eventually strayed away from God **again** and so **God**, who is full of mercy and compassion, sent **His Only Begotten Son** into the world ... to personally call people back to Himself.

We just heard **Paul** tell us in his letter to the **Ephesians**,

"God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ."

Wow! Our God just doesn't give up!

We were dead ... and **God** ... brought us to life ... with Christ.

As we pass the **mid-point** of the **40 days of Lent** on this Laudate Sunday,
we carry a feeling of joy as we move forward toward ... **Easter Sunday**,
when we celebrate **the great victory over sin & death ...**
that God accomplished through His Son, Jesus.

Jesus said today, "*Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must
the Son of Man be lifted up, so everyone who believes in Him may have Eternal Life.*"

Do you want to have **Girl Scout cookies**? You have to go to a **Girl Scout**.

Do you want to have **Eternal Life**? You have to go to **Jesus Christ**.

That's **how God** designed it!

You have to go to and believe in ...**the one lifted up** ... **Jesus**!

Let's use **the remainder of Lent** to grow our relationship and friendship with Jesus.

And Rejoice! We know the **end of the Story** ... **Jesus** overcame **death!**

Living with Him on **earth** insures that we will be with Him forever in **Heaven**.

For, God's eternal desire is that **all people** come to Him ... through **His Son!**