One of my favorite Bible passages is John 14, when Thomas, at the last supper, perhaps sensing something is changing, says to Jesus they do not know where He is going, and where He is going they will know the way. Jesus has told them to not let their hearts be troubled, and gives them the promise of heaven. But I've always taken that line to mean they know the way to heaven because it's there in them. Jesus has shown it to them. They just need to perfect how they love God and one another, which will take fine-tuning the rest of their lives, and show that to one another.

That can be a problem though in our world and our lives. We suffer. We hurt one another. We know pain and loss. We see cruelty. But God sees something more in us - our potential. This is why He loves us. And when we live out what Jesus has told us, we can have such power to bring hope into our world.

For many years, an active priest in the diocese of Billings, Montana, was Msgr. Joseph Gluszek, who's cause for canonization has stemmed from a grassroots effort within the diocese as people were amazed at his strong faith, his kindness and compassion, despite the harsh circumstances through which he lived.

During World War II, he was imprisoned in Dachau, as Prisoner 22104. At one point, he was too weak to lift a shovel, yet he was working on a road for the Third Reich. When he collapsed in the mud, he prayed for death.

The guard stood over him. “I could kill you now - you are of no use to us,” he said. “But you will be dead soon anyway,” and the guard moved on and left him for dead and moved on.

The prisoner then heard some noise behind a nearby fence. He could see a German girl, 10 or 11, picking up apples that had fallen from the trees. After the guard moved away, she threw some apples toward the prisoner. He reached through the fence and picked one up.

“We have no bread at home,” she said in a low voice, “but I will be going soon to the bakery and will bring you some.”

An hour later when the child returned, the prisoner still lay by the fence. When she saw the guard was not watching, she threw him a piece of bread. It was still warm.

“This was the moment,” said Monsignor Joseph Gluszek, “that I stopped praying for death and started praying for life. I realized that even in Germany there were still human beings who were good.”

Guszek grew up in a village in what is now southern Poland. His family had a few acres of land, two cows, some chickens, and a few pigs. After the first World War, his father came home suffering from malaria. In four years, he had died.

After the funeral, young Joseph Gluszek lingered beside his father’s grave. An older man visiting the cemetery that day noticed him. Talking to the youth, he learned that with the death of his father, Joseph’s education would end. “I want to talk to your mother,” the older man said.

“This good Christian man, who had no children of his own, wanted to do something for another,” says Gluszek. “Thanks to him, I was able to finish college and go to the University of Krakow. he took care of all my expenses until I was ordained a priest.”

Gluszek, ordained in Krakow in 1935, was assigned to a village in the mountains of southern Poland. But his peaceful life there ended abruptly on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. The first day of the war, the Nazis arrested him and took him in chains from Poland to Czechoslovakia. Then he was sent to Germany, to the concentration camp at Dachau.

He reflected, “Jews, Gypsies and priests. These were the three categories destined to die in the concentration camp. They got rid of the Jews and the Gypsies first. About 400 Polish priests survived out of the 1,300 there.”

Two-and-a-half years after the apple incident, the prisoners at Dachau learned of an order for their extermination. Henrich Himmler, head of the Gestapo, did not want the advancing American troops to find any prisoners. And so at 9 p.m., on April 29, 1945, the local SS were ordered to machine-gun every prisoner, burn the camp, and move into the Alps.

“God had different plans for us,” though Msgr. Gluszek said. “That very Sunday, at 4 in the afternoon, good General Patton liberated the camp.” He had spent nearly the entire war inside that camp.

Here he saw such evil; thousands survived but millions did not. The victorious Americans and British undertook the welfare of those who remained, including slave laborers conscripted for the German war machine, and put them in displaced persons camps. Gluszek was assigned to one of these camps, and he ended up serving as the long chaplain for 11,000 Polish young people who had been snatched from the schools and streets of Poland.

The end of the war did not bring peace to Europe. Later, Gluszek watched from his camp as the Soviet Union cut off all rail, water and highway routes through East Germany to West Berlin. He knew then that he did not want to go back to a Poland that would be under the control of such an oppressive reigme.

But to come to America, his dream, a priest would need the sponsorship of an American bishop. And the truth is, it wasn't easy to find a bishop to take a concentration camp survivor. Msgr. Gluszek says he doesn't blame them, as survivors needed therapy to become normal again. But one day an American priest from Chicago visited the displaced person's camp. The

priest found out that Gluszek had been a priest in the village from which the U.S. priest's own mother had immigrated to America. After the American priest continued on to Rome, he met William Condon, bishop of the Diocese of Great Falls, Montana. He told the bishop about Gluszek, and the bishop invited the monsignor to come to his diocese.

In 1950, after 9 days in a small Army boat, he arrived in New York. But his journey would still be difficult. He could speak German, Polish, Bohemian and some Spanish but not English. But here's where love of neighbor again made a different. People helped him to learn English. He served in Red Lodge then Billing Montana, and then after only 2 years became pastor of a parish and also helped at several others, including Geyser, where his friend, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, who he had met back in Poland, actually came to visit him and offer Mass - amazing the farming community with his kindness.

When he turned 70, he retired and continued to help at nursing homes. He died in 2002, at the age of 91, and late in his life he remarked how important the small moments were of loving our neighbor. A kind stranger in a cemetery, a child whose name he never heard, a famous general, a

priest visiting a displaced persons camp and a caring cardinal destined for the highest office in the Church - all of these profoundly changed his life.

We have the power to do this too, but we have to understand the law. The tragedy is as humans we are blinded. But over the course of his life, as people helped him, he was able to help others because he had that deeper understanding of the law of God and put it into action.

Jesus this week converses with a scribe, and the man seems genuinely wanting to understand the law's most important part, as the law had added 365 prohibitions and 248 positive commands in the Torah, so which of these mattered most? Jesus quotes the "Shema," which is in our first reading from Deuteronomy. Love of God matters; but it's not enough. A person also needs to love their neighbor as themselves. How then does one get there?

With respect to God, loving Him is a matter of heart, mind and soul. With respect to the heart, where is your heart? Are you focused on loving God and is your heart with him, or is it in other things in your life? Does your heart rest with God and do you let Him into your heart but opening up your

hear to Him with your sins and struggles and your anxieties? Is your heart on your job, your possessions, your schedule, or is it with God? With respect to the soul, we keep spiritually fit by coming to Mass, and making time for God in prayer. And with respect to the mind, we think about the faith, trying to understand what we believe and why at a deeper level. Lastly, with respect to strength, a question can be how do we stand up for the faith and help others to see the truth? When a loved one is making a bad moral decision, do we help them try to see the right path? When a family member says “I’m not going to Mass,” do we ignore it or talk about it with them about why it’s so important? When someone starts bashing the Church, or misrepresenting what a moral teaching is about, do we say something? Do we show a willingness to do the right thing such as not engaging in bad actions like gossiping or putting down others?

But the thing of it is, faith needs to be put into practice. And this is where love of neighbor is so important. This takes many forms.

One is remembering we are all created in the image and likeness of God, so important in this time when we are so polarized. Take the scribe in the Gospel. Often when we meet a scribe, they seem to be out to get Jesus or

trap Him; but this man seems to be on a genuine search for the truth. We are told “he answered with understanding,” meaning the scribe listened to Jesus. On our part, can we strive to see the good in people even if we disagree with them? Can we try to find common ground with people? Sometimes it’s so easy to just let anger take over. But look at what happened with Monsignor Joseph and that girl in Germany; she would have been told by the Nazi regime that he was not worth helping for he was not German, but she simply saw a man in need. It takes work but if our faith is incorporated into our hearts, minds and souls, we can see God in one another. It’s not easy; love of neighbor is tangible, messy and difficult because the “other” - unlike God - can easy be deemed unworthy of our love. In Luke’s Gospel this includes loving the hated Samaritan who is also our neighbor. For us maybe that is our opposite politically, that rival at work, the hard-to-love family member, the kid who bullied our kid. The Samaritan proves himself a neighbor by not being exclusive in his love, and neither can we.

Secondly, as Monsignor Joseph pointed out, so many little things matter. Every day before us is the power to make a difference. Perhaps the people in Monsignor Joseph’s life didn’t realize at the time what they did, but they

all played a role in helping him on his way to heaven. When we open our eyes to the spiritual and material needs around us, what a profound difference we can make.

And lastly, love of neighbor is that strength part again too - not being afraid to talk about what we believe and why even when it is challenging.

Today and throughout November we remember the faithful departed, and think a little more deeply about our mortality but also about the promise of the resurrection, of how death does not have the last word. God shows us how much we are loved, and the saints and so many of those we have known and lost show us too how to respond to that love. Now more than ever, this world needs hope - something that was given to Fr. Joseph when left for dead as a Nazi prisoner years ago, and then by an elderly man who helped him, others who helped him learn English, a bishop who brought him to America, and then something he passed on to so many people which is why he is on the road to canonization. Each one of us has this power though - it just takes knowing what our faith is about and putting into action. We all want to get to heaven - and the way to get there is knowing the real meaning of the law and putting it into practice every day, for while

sometimes in the world all we see is evil, God sees what is good in us - which is why as we hear in Hebrews he offered Himself for the sins of us all. Let us find in ourselves what God sees in us, having the hunger the scribe did for the truth, and through our way of life reveal that truth to one another.